

Crime and Forgiveness

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you; leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24).

God wants us to get along; God wants us to be forgiving. God wants what is best for us.

On a television crime show not too long ago, there was an amazing story of forgiveness. A family of six was camping, sleeping in tents in a national park. In the middle of the night, a man cut a hole in the tent and carried away their 7-year-old daughter.

Almost immediately, the mother began to pray for her daughter, of course, but also for the kidnapper and she made a commitment to forgive him. After a while the perpetrator began calling the mother but the calls could not be traced. She used these calls to build a relationship with him. After about a year he called and he opened up about what had happened and the family learned what the mother knew in her heart all along— that the child was dead.

The mother still said, "Forgiveness is hard work, but it is the only thing that will set you free."

Harboring a grudge or withholding forgiveness only puts **you** in prison, and keeps you from being forgiven.

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven'"(Matthew 18:21-22).

Consider the following;

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23: 34).

If He can forgive those who crucified Him, if He can forgive us whose sins put Him on that cross, then surely, surely we can forgive those who trespass against us.

For the elders,
Gary Woodall