

Channel Surfing

The power of forgiveness

SPOTLIGHT

The Power of Forgiveness

New documentary film airs this month on PBS stations nationwide.

The potential good that can come from forgiveness is the subject of a provocative new documentary film airing this month on national public television.

The Power of Forgiveness from Journey Films, makers of the critically acclaimed Bonhoeffer, is a collection of short stories revealing how forgiveness could or should displace conventional responses, such as vengeance and justice, in resolving conflict. The film also connects personal forgiveness with better health, pointing out that blood pressure levels are lower in people who readily forgive.

"Forgiveness has struck a chord," says Journey Films founder Martin Doblmeier. "[It's] the first step in a new direction."

For 16 months Doblmeier traveled around the world gathering stories that explore how forgiveness can alleviate resentment, hatred and sorrow.

In Northern Ireland, where generations of Protestants and Catholics pass down painful memories of injustice, public

schools have begun incorporating forgiveness in curriculums. Officials call it “planting forgiveness” in children—a long-term approach to combating revenge-based cycles of pain.

“In most communities ... we find lots of company in our anger, [but] we’re often alone in the pathways that lead to forgiveness,” Doblmeier told Detroit Free Press religion reporter David Crumm.

Doblmeier shows how the Amish in rural Pennsylvania helped the whole world see the healing power of forgiveness in October 2006 after five of their community’s young girls were shot and killed in a schoolhouse by a man who then turned the gun on himself. The Christian community forgave the gunman’s family almost immediately.

“Retribution is not part of [the Amish] vocabulary,” Donald B. Kraybill, author of *Amish Grace*, says in the film. “The community helps them absorb the hatred.”

But to even talk about forgiveness, one should never begin by asking people to first forgive their enemies, says James Forbes, retired pastor of New York’s Riverside Church. “First, let them think about how much forgiveness God has had to grant them,” he says. “They have had to make withdrawals from the bank of grace many, many times.”

Although the film includes comments from non-Christians, such as Elie Wiesel, Thich Nhat Hanh and Marianne Williamson, Doblmeier drew from his Christian roots to explore the centrality of forgiveness in one’s life. “Hopefully with [this film], people will take a moment and reflect on their own lives and the role forgiveness plays in how we treat others

and ourselves,” he says.

Paul Steven Ghiringhelli

Sky Angel

»**Sky Angel TV's permanent switch** to delivering its channels over the Internet instead of by satellite will be completed this month, requiring all satellite-based subscribers to transition to Internet Protocol Television (IPTV). Sky Angel attributes the change to an aging satellite and the loss of a satellite transponder. Though IPTV will offer many more channels and options (such as Video On Demand), only Sky Angel customers with broadband Internet can make the transition. This has upset some existing customers who purchased lifetime subscriptions and cannot afford high-speed Internet, not to mention an additional monthly IPTV subscription fee. Some aired their grievances on filmmaker Phil Cooke's "Change Revolution" blog, with one customer even urging others to sign a petition asking Sky Angel to honor lifetime subscriptions. But Sky Angel's Nancy Christopher says the terms for former lifetime subscribers were conditional, and based on the "operating lifetime of the direct broadcast satellite" service. She added that Sky Angel is pleased with how many satellite subscribers are signing up for IPTV.

»**The lyrically compelling Caedmon's Call song** "Ten Thousand Angels," a bonus track on their new album, Overdressed, achieved a rare platform on national TV in January when it was featured on the biggest episode of ABC's hit drama series Grey's Anatomy. The song got five minutes of playtime in the show's emotionally charged final scene. "All that has been broken will be restored," sang returning band member Derek Webb. "Here runs deep waters for all who are thirsty. Love has come. Love has come for you."