

‘You Owe Me Restitution!’

Remember in the cartoon, “The Great Pumpkin,” when Sally was “robbed of her tricks and treats?” Angry and hurt, she looked for some payback from Linus.

It’s a natural reaction for all of us when we’re wronged, isn’t it? But it isn’t God’s way, and it’s not what he wants for us.

But sometimes, no matter how trivial the transgression, forgiving someone who has wronged you can be a real test of character.

For example: Despite the perpetrator’s lack of remorse, the families of the victims of the nine people murdered by 21-year-old Dylann Roof in June at Emmanuel African Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, certainly displayed Godly character when they publicly forgave Roof for his heinous crimes.

What about Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers? Do you remember his reaction when he saw them again years later?

Of course there is Jesus, who said while hanging on a Roman cross after suffering much physical pain and humiliation: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34, MEV).

A recent incident challenged my character. Although it wasn’t a life-or-death situation like the above examples, it certainly put my own capacity to forgive to the test.

My wife is a member of a local trading post page on Facebook. We had been looking to buy a laptop for a reduced price, and she found one on the page for \$100. My wife made the appropriate contacts, and we decided to meet the person

selling it at a local Panera.

We arrived and the young girl seemed pleasant enough. She had turned the laptop on and, with the WiFi at Panera, it appeared as if it were working properly. Although I don't know much about computers, I thought I had checked it out thoroughly enough. I questioned how old it was, and the girl said it was two years old. She said she had only used it to write college papers. She was selling it because she had gotten another one for a graduation present.

When I brought the laptop home, however, I began to notice that it had numerous errors. For some reason, the browser wouldn't stay connected. I tried to work with it for more than an hour, but to no avail.

In front of my family, I became angry and frustrated. I wanted restitution. I gave into my flesh and began maligning the young woman's character. And, yes, I even cursed. Lord God, I beg your forgiveness.

However, I cannot blame anyone but myself for not being more thorough. I failed miserably at caveat emptor.

After sleeping a few hours, Jesus—as He often does—woke me up and seared my heart. He told me I needed to show the young woman grace, although she may have little or no remorse for her actions. After all, “For if you forgive men for their sins, Your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men for their sins, neither will your Father forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15, MEV).

Praise God, the Lord has forgiven me for transgressions of which I have repented.

“Lord, I ask You now to forgive this young woman and turn her heart to You. Let her seek You and find You. Save her soul. And please forgive me for my un-Christlike words and actions.”

Have you been faced with similar situations? Do you harbor any unforgiveness you need to confess to God?

I pray you rid yourself of such venom. It only hurts you. Believe me, I know.

“For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever” (Psalm 117:2, MEV).

And as I always like to say, “there is that.”