

What Compelled the Facebook Killer's Ex to Meet With the Victim's Family?

On Easter Sunday, Robert Godwin was walking down a street in Cleveland, Ohio. Steve Stephens gunned him down, then posted a video of the killing on Facebook. Before the shooting, he demanded that Godwin say "Joy Lane," the name of Stephens's ex-girlfriend. "She's the reason this is about to happen to you," he told Godwin.

Two days later, Lane and two of Godwin's daughters met for the first time. There were no accusations, just hugs and mutual grief.

The sisters told her that the killing was not her fault and they hold no ill will toward her. In an interview with *CNN*, several of Godwin's children said they held no animosity toward Stephens, either. They explained that their father taught them the value of hard work, how to love God, and how to forgive.

The same day Lane and Godwin's daughters met, Stephens shot himself.

Another suicide making headlines is the death of former NFL player Aaron Hernandez. Hernandez was an All-American player at the University of Florida, where his team won a national title in 2009. By 2011, he had developed into one of the top five tight ends in the NFL. He became a father and purchased a 7,100-square-foot home in Massachusetts.

In 2013, Hernandez was arrested and charged with murder in the shooting death of a friend, Odin Lloyd. He was convicted and sentenced to life in prison without parole. Yesterday morning, he was found dead in his prison cell. According to

authorities, he used bed sheets to hang himself from his window.

So much of life is so unpredictable. *Fox News's* announcement that it is ending its association with Bill O'Reilly shocked the cable-news world. Many political analysts thought Democrat Jon Ossoff would win Tuesday's election in Georgia.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, uniformly liked by those who know him and elected to Congress eight times, is facing historically low approval ratings as a result of his party's failure to enact health care reform. Now we're learning that the White House may renew its effort to repeal and replace Obamacare before the president's 100-day deadline.

Change is the unchanging principle of our fallen world. However, what matters most is not subject to such vagaries. Human nature does not change. Nothing in today's news is new to human experience. It's not surprising that the meeting between Joy Lane and Robert Godwin's children made headlines—the forgiveness he taught his family is the grace our hearts seek today.

Do you need to forgive someone who hurt you? Do you need to forgive yourself?

God's word calls us to "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). Biblical forgiveness is not a feeling but a decision. It is the choice to pardon, to refuse to punish. When a governor pardons a criminal, she does not excuse the crime or pretend it did not happen. She chooses not to inflict the punishment the criminal deserves. It is the same with us.

Corrie ten Boom, the Holocaust survivor who lost her entire family to the Nazis, likened forgiveness to letting go of a bell rope. When you're pulling on a rope that rings a bell and you let it go, the bell keeps ringing for a while. But if you

keep your hands off the rope, the bell will begin to slow and eventually it will stop.

Forgiveness is letting go of the rope. {eoa}