

Fouled and Forgiven

Basketball is my favorite sport to play. There is something about the perfect jump shot or a quick move driving in for a layup that will give you a rush like nothing else. It's fast and intense—the way a sport should be.

When I was a sophomore in college, a new freshman started school. This kid could play. His name was Eddie Gomes and he had moves that I had never seen before. He could dribble behind his back and between his legs. For that matter, he could dribble behind *my* back and between *my* legs. And he was lightning quick.

One minute you were guarding him, and the next minute you couldn't find him. He had faked you out, dribbled around you and fired off a shot. Eddie had the strangest jump shot any of us had ever seen. But, as the coach said, "Any kid who can shoot 80 percent from the floor can shoot the ball any way he wants." I am about 6 feet tall and so is Eddie, but the difference is that he can *dunk the ball*. On a good day, at the top of my jump, I can *touch the net* (I think they made a movie about that).

On a recent Sunday morning, Eddie and I were praying together and he related this story: On a Friday night when he was playing in a game, a player from the opposite team fouled him. He fouled him flagrantly and on purpose. And he got away with it. Eddie said that it infuriated him and he spent the rest of the game chasing after his newfound enemy,

trying to get even. Then Eddie said something amazing. He said, "My anger basically *took me out of the game*. I was no good to the team. My focus was on what had been done to me, and in doing everything I could to retaliate and get even, I just as well should have been sitting on the bench."

Apostle Peter probably did not play basketball, but evidently had a similar experience in life. In Matthew 18:21 he asks Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Wow! He must have really thought he had it all together. Then Jesus answered, "Not seven times, but 490 times (*in one day*)."

Huh? That is about one instance of forgiveness every 3 minutes!

The issue is not about the other person. Jesus wasn't saying that they "fouled" you 490 times in one day. Quite often it is just one offense. Jesus was saying you might have to forgive the offender *in your heart and mind* 490 times, all in one day to finally get it out of your craw and out of your gut where the anger resides.

Someone once said that unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person gets sick and dies. We spend our lives chasing them around the "basketball court" of life, trying to get even. And it simply takes us out of the game. We might just as well be sitting on the sidelines watching the game go by. We are no use to anyone,

not our families,
nor our friends and certainly not to the kingdom of God.

This week, as you journey in the basketball game of life we call the Christ walk, decide to forgive. Forgive everyone and anyone that has
“fouled” you. It may have been a friend or a co-worker. It could have been a
family member. It may even be your spouse. Sometimes, you may need to forgive
yourself first. The pain inside your heart of hearts is not hurting them, but
it is taking *you* out of the game. You are sidelined.

Is it easy to forgive? No, it is not at all easy. Is it worth it? Yes, without a doubt. And remember this, “Even when we were sinners, Christ died for us and God demonstrated his own love
toward us by *forgiving us* “ (see Rom. 5:8). We didn’t deserve it, but He forgave us anyway. And this same God, through the power of the Holy Ghost, will
give you the strength, the grace and the desire to forgive also.

PRAYER POWER WEEK OF 1/31/2011

This week thank God for His amazing love and forgiveness. Ask Him to bring to
mind anyone you may not have forgiven. Forgive, bless and pray for those who have hurt you and thank Him for
answering your prayers. Continue
to pray for your enemies and thank God that He, through the power of the Holy
Ghost, gives you the grace to do so.
Remember those who have suffered the loss of loved ones

through war,
crime or natural disasters. Pray
for those victimized by the ravages of weather and ask God for
opportunities to
help those in need. Continue to pray for revival, Israel and
our nation's
leaders. Luke 6:35-37