

What Is Your Story?

So, what is your story? Who has been cruel to you? Perhaps bitterly cruel. What injustice have you suffered? How have you been mistreated?

Perhaps miserably so. Who has cheated you? Abused you? Mistreated you? Lied to you? Lied *about* you? Maybe it was last week. Maybe it was a lifetime ago.

As you remember your suffered injustice, how does it affect the way you view your future? Or, let me put it another way: What are you waiting for? Are you waiting to get even? A chance for payback? An opportunity to exact your revenge? If so, you have no future.

You may get even, you may achieve payback, you may gain your revenge, *but you will stay forever chained to the injustice done to you*. You are in danger of forming your identity around your injustice in such a way that it forever shapes your future. Even if you get even, you will still drag that ball and chain with you.

In looking for an opportunity to be cruel to the person who was cruel to you, you will become a cruel person. And in becoming a cruel person, your cruelty will, in all likelihood, not be limited to the person or persons who have treated you cruelly. In seeking the opportunity to repay cruelty with cruelty, cruelty will become your identity, your lifestyle and your character. Tragically, you will do the very thing you hate: You will inflict cruel injustice upon others.

Worse yet, you will *become* the very thing you hate. This is how evil perpetuates itself. This is how evil moves from host to host until the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (see 1 John 5:19). Evil is only defeated when someone absorbs the blow and forgives, thus ending the cycle of evil.

Absorbing the blow without retaliation *by exercising the option to forgive* is not weakness or acquiescence with injustice; it is taking up your cross and following Jesus. It is following Jesus to Calvary, and there ending evil through the triumph of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not weakness; it is the power of God—the power of God to overcome evil by depriving evil of a host for retaliation.

Again, it needs to be restated. You don't have to forget the past. Forgiveness is not amnesia. You don't have to say your weren't wronged.

Forgiveness is found in truth and not a lie. You can remember the wrong. It can be named and shamed as sin. You don't have to abandon the hope of justice.

Justice is a passion of the Lord. "For the Lord loves justice, and does not forsake His saints" (Ps. 37:28, NKJV).

Because you believe in God's passion for justice, you can leave justice in the hands of God. The call to forgiveness is not to forget the past. The call to forgiveness is not a form of self-deception. The call to forgiveness is not an abandonment of justice. The call to forgiveness is the call to stop the cycle of revenge. The call to forgiveness is

the call to
abandon the devil's game. The call to forgiveness is the call
to no longer collaborate
with death.

The attitude Christians are to adopt in heeding Jesus' call
to a life of radical forgiveness is not to follow death and
all his
friends—friends like revenge, retribution and retaliation. The
friends of death
are a vicious lot—inflicting paybacks, getting even, settling
the score. The
friends of death are the things that bring the most misery to
our world—things
like bitterness, hatred and war.

Through adopting the call of Jesus to radical forgiveness,
we find a way out of the cycle of recycled revenge. We find a
way out of a
futile life that is nothing more than a battle from beginning
to end.

This is the Jesus way. And we need to see that the Jesus way
is far more than “how to go heaven when you die.” When Jesus
said He was the
way, the truth, and the life (see John 14:6), He wasn't just
saying He was the
way to salvation in a postmortem afterlife, rather He was
claiming that His way
of living is the true way that leads to life. The Jesus way is
always the way
of forgiveness.

Seventy times seven! This is the way that ends the endless
battle, that breaks the cycle of recycled revenge, and that
refuses to follow
death and all his friends. This is the way that gives the
future a hope. The

future you look for, the future you long for, the future that would free you from the unending repetition of the painful past, lies in your capacity to move beyond the past through the liberating practice of faith-based forgiveness. It is forgiveness that creates the future you want to live in.

✖ Adapted from *Unconditional? The Call of Jesus to Radical Forgiveness* by Brian Zahnd, copyright 2010, published by Charisma House. In a world where the ugliness of rage and retaliation are driving the story line, this book offers the beauty, reconciliation and total restoration of forgiveness the way Jesus taught us to live it. Following His example will transform your life. To order a copy click on this link.

PRAYER POWER WEEK OF 2/28/2011

This week allow God to work His grace in you by praying for and blessing those who have hurt and abused you. Pray for those victimized by the earthquake in New Zealand as well as other catastrophes. Continue to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, the protection of Christians in the Middle East and a harvest of souls. Ask Him to send laborers into those harvest fields and to use the turmoil in the Middle East to accomplish His purposes. Continue to pray for our nation and its leaders. John 14:6;