

Which of the two would be more grateful?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one who was forgiven the most." "That's right," said Jesus. Then turning to the woman, but speaking to Simon, he said, "Do you see this woman? I came to your home; you provided no water for my feet, but she rained tears on my feet and dried them with her hair. You gave me no greeting, but from the time I arrived she hasn't quit kissing my feet. You provided nothing for freshening up, but she has soothed my feet with perfume.

Impressive, isn't it? She was forgiven many, many sins, and so she is very, very grateful. If the forgiveness is minimal, the gratitude is minimal." Then he spoke to her: "I forgive your sins." That set the dinner guests talking behind his back: "Who does he think he is, forgiving sins!" He ignores them and said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Within scripture is the whole counsel of God concerning any subject matter or life issue, but you have to search for it. The Bible cannot be condensed as other books without losing significant substance and it takes diligent effort to acquire the wisdom it contains. To leave out any part perverts the overall contents as they are all intertwined to reveal absolute truth.

From the very moment I read this I KNEW I NEVER had the right, from that point on, to withhold forgiveness from anyone or even hold a grudge. It has been a challenge, to say the least, to walk in this light and literally impossible to do so without God's Spirit empowering. As I grew in Christ I also became aware that to not forgive only hurts the one offended and not the offender.

In Hebrews 12:15 it speaks of "a root of bitterness" that **will** cause trouble and **will** defile many. Bitterness is the inevitable, yes inevitable, end result of a chain of events. First there is "the offense" followed by unforgiveness which leads to resentment and becomes bitterness. I call it the "cancer of the soul". So how do we, as those who believe, avoid this cancer? The solution is far easier in theory than practice. But it is there and readily available to all who seek it.

If you knew of one substance, a food perhaps, that could guarantee that you would never get a particular cancer if you ate it everyday, would you, even if it wasn't super tasty all the time? I would, in fact my diet contains several anti-oxident foods for this very reason, but I have NO guarantee. But if you could eat something spiritual every day that could keep you from getting this kind of "soul cancer", would you? Well there is and **it's guaranteed!** But you have to LOVE it, not just eat it. **Psalm 119:165**, (the longest single chapter in the Bible) states this; **Great peace have they which love thy law: and NOTHING shall offend them.** The more you know and love God's Word the less and less easily you will be offended to the point it will become impossible to offend you. That's not my opinion, that's God's reality.

I once heard a sermon called "Don't take the Cheese". See we have an enemy that is HELL BENT on destroying us. He moves about mankind creating offenses as one setting traps with cheese to catch to kill unsuspecting rats. Luke 17:1 puts it this way; "It is inevitable that offenses (also called stumbling blocks) will come, but woe to him through whom they come! 2. It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. 3. Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him." Matthew 18:21 states; Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus *said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

Both the offender and the offended have HUGE responsibility here. To the best of my ability I try not to set cheese traps of any kind for anyone. Paul puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 8:13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.) but I am human and will do so even inadvertently. But one thing I do,

I FORGIVE, EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE, ALL THE TIME.

If by doing so I can guarantee that I will never get the spiritual cancer known as bitterness than that's a no brainer. If I need to love HIS Word and bask in it daily to do so then that's what I do.

You may say; "well he's obviously never had anything dramatic or difficult to forgive". May I give you just a few examples?

Not long after becoming a believer I married a childhood sweetheart of some seven years. We were deeply in love and voted most likely to live forever that way at our church in Germany. Then she left for the states and something went horribly wrong. Several weeks later I got out of the Army and came home to a very unexpected divorce. There was no "uncontested divorce" clause then so her reason was mental cruelty which was totally unsubstantiated. I conceded to very painful false accusations giving her the divorce. I moved on but before doing so I forgave her and told her so face to face. Several years later, after marrying someone else and starting a family, that relationship was restored to a healthy caring relationship in Christ. To this day she is unable to explain what happened during those three months of separation or why she did what she did. To this day she regrets it. But to this day we have a healthy caring relationship because of the ability to forgive.

Then, to add insult to injury, the pastor of the mega church where both my parents and X attended ripped me to shreds assuming the divorce was my fault. He accused me of taking her into some "cult" in Germany and told me I needed to repent and fix what I broke. I forgave him even as he spoke and two years later was an integral part of that church with a great relationship both with him and several of the pastoral staff.

Now the biggy. Three days after my seventeen year old daughter was killed in a car accident involving a vehicle belonging to the church I was attending at the time the pastor called me into his office to share something important.