

Let It Go

- **John 8:3-11** And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.
- Stone has always been the building material of choice in the nation of Israel. From the beginning, stones were used for ...
 - Building walls
 - Closing access (to wells, springs, caves, graves, etc.)
 - Ammunition (for slings and catapults)
 - Boundary markers
 - Idols (objects of devotion)
 - Spoiling the land of an enemy
 - Marking the grave of an offender (passersby added stones)
- Is it any wonder that stones were also used for the ultimate penalty? Death by stoning was the punishment meted out for crimes that could not be forgiven under the law of Moses.
- Stones by their very nature represent “hardness” and were thus a fitting symbol of the inflexibility of the law. Stone against flesh was like the Law against life – unforgiving. One critical mistake, and the ultimate penalty ensued.
- The scribes and Pharisees were entirely within the law and within their right to be “unforgiving” this particular day; after all, this woman had broken the law and deserved death!
- These men held stones in their hands, but they also held the stony hardness of unforgiveness in their hearts. Unforgiveness is very much like a stone ...
 - It builds walls
 - It closes access
 - It provides ammunition for weapons
 - It jealously guards boundaries
 - It demands devotion to an absolute cause
 - It attempts to spoil the life of another
 - It marks the spot of an old offense, and continually heaps it up
- As these religious men stood holding stones of judgment in their hands, they were ready to kill for the sake of the law ... and yet each of them had undoubtedly broken the law in one way or another (that’s what temple sacrifices were all about).
- Jesus’ immortal words cut them to the quick – “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” Eventually, the words penetrated their conscience, and they dropped the stones and left. Sometimes, no matter how bad the offense, you have to be willing to “let it go.” If Jesus is willing to forgive, we have to be willing also!
- The reason we hold on to offenses is because we build up a rationale against forgiveness in our own minds. We put it together logically, piece by piece, until the case seems airtight to us. And yet, we know instinctively that the actual arguments circulating obsessively in our minds would sound pretty unconvincing to others. So, rather than voice them, we simply sum them all up with one conclusive statement (or attitude): “I can’t forgive.” What we really mean is, “I shouldn’t have to forgive!”
- **FORGIVENESS DOES NOT TRIVIALIZE OUR PAIN, JUST AS GOD DOES NOT TRIVIALIZE OUR SIN!**
- Some people believe that when God forgives our sin, He overlooks our sin, but that is not what the Bible teaches!
- **Nahum 1:3a (NLT)** The Lord is slow to get angry, but his power is great, and he never lets the guilty go unpunished.
- God’s mercy cannot override His holiness! He does not casually declare that sinners are suddenly righteous and serious offenses are suddenly inconsequential. Our sinful offenses demanded payment ... and that took the agony of Calvary!

- If a perfect God finds it impossible to just “overlook” sin against Him, how could He expect us to just “overlook” the serious hurts inflicted by others against us? Sin creates an obligation – and someone has to pay! Why should I be willing to “let it go” when someone hurt me?
- Each one of us will have many situations arise in life where we are much more concerned about someone’s obligation to us than they are! But if we hold on to the offense, we in effect become an **emotional hostage** to our offender.
- One of the best reasons for forgiving someone is not what it does for them, but what it does for you! Letting go of a rattlesnake might help the snake, but it benefits you as well!
- **Hebrews 12:1** Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
- **WITH EVERY OFFENSE COMES A CHOICE!** We can hold on to it and become bitter, or we can release it and become better.
- James Garfield had been president of the United States for less than four months when he was shot in the back with a revolver on July 2, 1881. While the president remained conscious, the doctor probed the wound with his little finger, unsuccessfully trying to detect the bullet. Over the course of the summer, teams of doctors tried to locate the bullet. The president clung to life through July and August, but in September he finally died – not from the gunshot wound but from infection. The repeated probing of the wound, which the doctor thought would help the president, ultimately killed him.
- Continually reliving the hurts we’ve experienced infects not only our life, but the lives of those around us. One of the strongest arguments for forgiveness is the consequences of unforgiveness!
- **FORGIVENESS IS THE OBLIGATION OF THE FORGIVEN!** It must be astonishing to God sometimes that those who have been forgiven so much would refuse to forgive so little.
- **Matthew 6:14-15** For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
- While the pain that someone has inflicted on you is REAL, it is also NEGLIGIBLE compared to the wrong you have committed against God. **That is the ultimate reason why you should forgive!**
- **FORGIVENESS IS SURRENDERING THE RIGHT TO HURT YOU FOR HURTING ME.**