

Christmas Is For-Giving

John 3:16-17 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

For innocent children Christmas is a highlight of the year, but for many adults it becomes a very difficult time due to life's baggage ("I just want to survive the holidays") – death, divorce, division in families.

Psycho factor – every extended family has one (raise your hand if you have one in your extended family – those who didn't are the psychos!)

Brutal family pain in Joseph's life ... STORY ... and when Joseph finally met up with his brothers the years of questions and hurt finally let loose!

Genesis 45:1-2 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

If some of us actually had the courage to deal with our relationship issues face-to-face, we would weep just like Joseph. But it is easy to slip into a cycle of continuing the hurt and recycling the pain. **The only way to stop the merry-go-round and get off is FORGIVENESS.**

Luke 6:27-28 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

How do you forgive when you can't control your feelings? You make a CHOICE to focus on how much Christ has forgiven you, and compare His list against you to your list against your offender. And then you let go of the offense, just like Jesus did for you!

Colossians 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

WHAT IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF FORGIVENESS FOR YOU?

Look what was on the other side of forgiveness for Joseph ...

Genesis 45:8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Genesis 50:19-20 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

It is an URGENT matter that you deal with unforgiveness!

Matthew 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

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.

For some of you, the person you need to forgive is YOURSELF ...

2 Samuel 12:20-23 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

WHAT DID DAVID DO?

- He accepted what could not be changed
- He gave his feelings to God
- He focused on what was left, not what was lost
- He asked God for forgiveness and moved on

Isaiah 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

"In the middle of the year that my world fell apart, I saw the Lord!"

Don't spend your life looking in the rearview mirror!

Philippians 3:13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

Did you know that the story of David's fall and the story of God rebuilding his life is a big part of the Christmas story?

Matthew 1:6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;

Matthew 1:21-23 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

“all this was done” ... God even used David's failure to bring it about!

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