



Links Players

Is Par 7 or 70?

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. (Colossians 3:13)

Playing professional baseball for 16 seasons (5 in the major leagues) was a dream fulfilled. I doubt the dream would have been realized had forgiving others not been introduced to me early in this journey of faith in Jesus.

Raised in a one-bedroom house in Tampa with three siblings, I was about five when the FBI arrested my dad in our presence. He was found guilty and sentenced to 9 years in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary.

Released after six years, our hope for a normal life was rudely interrupted when I had to jump on my dad's back and hit him to defend my mother from his physical abuse. Heartbreaking for an 11-year-old boy.

In 1981, as Michelle and I were sending out wedding invitations, she asked for my dad's address. She wanted to invite him! "No chance," I blurted out, which led to an intense rant describing the pain he put my family and me through. I was shocked that she would want to invite him to the wedding.

She even dared to ask me if I had ever forgiven my dad. I began wondering if she was the right girl for me to marry. Replying, "that man doesn't deserve to be forgiven," she asked calmly but thoughtfully, "do you deserve to be forgiven?" Wow, talk about a wake-up call. Was that a litmus test by her to know if I was the right guy? Maybe?

Thankfully the Spirit of God began working in my heart because of that question, and I did forgive my dad. I even started building a relationship with him, and 13 years later, on January 30, 1994, he said for the first time in my life, "son, I love you." Three years later, on May 16, 1997, he trusted Jesus as his Lord and Savior and received the forgiveness of God.

Looking back, it's like the quote in my previous devotional, the prisoner was set free, and I realized I had been the one held captive.

- Our forgiveness is only possible because of what Jesus did on the cross.
- We may never know how forgiving may impact others eternally.

Forgiveness is:

- Difficult but possible
- A step toward healing and building trust
- Letting go of resentment

Forgiveness is NOT:

- Conditional
- An automatic cure for the hurt or pain
- Ignoring safe boundaries that need to be set

"It's not an easy journey to get to a place where you forgive people. But it is such a powerful place because it frees you," writes Tyler Perry.

As the author of Hebrews reminds us about the Father's love, "I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds. And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices." (Hebrews 10:17-18)

PRAYER: Jesus, thank you for showing us how to forgive. Help us experience your grace, love, and forgiveness so others might know what it means to have their sins forgiven.

READING - Matthew 6:14-15, 18:21-35, 1 John 1:9

OPENING QUESTIONS: What story would you like to have told about you 50 years from now? Have you received the forgiveness only God can give you?

1. Discuss how you might relate to both men in the parable of the unforgiving debtor.

2. Have you been greatly forgiven? Talk about what that looks like to you.

3. Who in your life needs to be forgiven?
