



Links Players

The Poison We Drink

So, as those who have been chosen of God . . . bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

(Colossians 3:12-13, NASB)

It was a proud moment for me. I had been a member of Houston's Champions Golf Club for a few years, but it was the first time my father had played there with me.

He loved golf, and I had been telling him about Champions' rich history, its two championship golf courses, and how well its members knew golf, the rules, and golf etiquette.

A few holes into the back nine, the twosome behind hit into us off the tee. On the fourteenth hole, it happened again. Then, while we were standing in the fairway on the fifteenth, a short par-four, a ball from the tee rolled past my feet.

When they hit into us the first time, I was just embarrassed; now I was angry. So, I pulled out my three-wood, took aim and a full swing, and hit the ball back toward the fifteenth tee.

When they couldn't find their ball in the fairway, one of the guys walked up to the green to ask if we had seen it. I told him the last I had seen it; it was headed back toward the tee, probably to the right of the tee because I drew it a bit.

As he started getting animated, my 75-year-old father hurried over, waving his putter like William Wallace with a sword. Because my opponent was unarmed, he retreated, sparing my beloved golf club from an unseemly brawl and my father from an assault with a deadly PING putter charge.

Paul's statement to the Colossians that they should forgive others was not merely a good suggestion. Jesus commanded it. (See Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-22). Unforgiveness and its progeny, bitterness, are hard to shake, though, because they usually arise out of our being wronged.

Because we are made in the image of God, which allows us to recognize injustice, particularly our own, our emotions feed our sense of injustice. It's easy to be offended, become angry, and remain bound in bitterness and unforgiveness.

As reasonable as it sometimes seems, unforgiveness is not an act of reason. Think about it: Who is more upset by your unforgiveness, you or the person who wronged you? As it has been said, "Unforgiveness is the poison we drink hoping another will die."

That's how irrational it is. Also, unless you are perfect, you have hurt someone in the past and will hurt someone in the future. Would you deny another the same forgiveness you covet when you're the perpetrator? Unforgiveness is neither just nor rational; it's just emotional.

Emotions can be powerful, though sometimes they are too powerful for reasons to overcome. I think that's why Jesus chose a powerful emotion—fear—to combat them. Jesus said, "If you do not forgive others, your Father in heaven will not forgive you" (Matthew 6:14-15.)

That scares me. It should scare you. I know there are theologians who can explain Jesus' warning in a way that doesn't sound so eternal or ultimate, but I think it's safer to forgive. It's certainly safer than the retaliatory three-wood.

Prayer: Lord, help me to forgive others as you have forgiven me. Amen.

—

Scott Fiddler

Copyright 2025 Links Players International

The Links Daily Devotional appears Monday-Friday at linksplayers.com.