



LINKS PLAYERS DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Links Players

The Face of Forgiveness

You must forgive your brother or sister with all your heart, or my heavenly Father will not forgive you. (Matthew 18:35)

Shortly after the new year began, a group of six friends accepted an invitation to teach golf and care for political and business leaders at the Kigali Golf Club in Rwanda. As part of this mission trip, we also served in the Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania golf communities.

Our purpose was threefold: To identify new laborers to serve Jesus at golf courses and cities. Second, to encourage and strengthen existing groups and fellow laborers. Finally, to grow personally in the grace and love of Jesus.

While I could share details about the golf portion and the trip's results, what affected me most was meeting "Maria" in Rwanda. Our team met her in the Reconciliation Villages, where Tutsis and Hutus are in the process of forgiving one another.

The morning we visited, I sensed the gentle whisper of Jesus saying, "Peter, embrace this day fully. Breathe it in. Feel what I feel. Don't be scared." So, I committed myself to being present.

What I experienced that day forever changed my understanding/view/belief of forgiveness and reconciliation.

For those of you who don't know the Rwanda Genocide story, in April 1994, over one million people were killed in 100 days. Most of the Tutsi tribe were murdered by their friends, next-door neighbors, and even those they worshiped with in church.

Visiting the Reconciliation Villages and hearing firsthand testimony of people sitting next to each other, telling stories of forgiving this specific person for killing their children, spouse, or parents, was almost unbelievable.

When we entered the village meeting hall, Maria was worshipping the Lord beautifully. She was contagious—and we hadn't even heard her story! We discovered that she was one of the victims of the genocide, and sitting next to Philbert, who was part of the gang that had murdered her husband and seven of her children. She shared her very painful story, full of love and hurt and healing and forgiveness.

When I think of Maria, I see the face of forgiveness. She had forgiven Philbert with all her heart.

Driving home from the village, I felt a deep, deep need to repent for the little and big things I hold tightly against others. I searched my heart to see, "Why won't I release forgiveness in the same way that Jesus has forgiven me— with all my heart?"

Perhaps part of my issue is that deep down I don't really believe I need to be forgiven for much, that I'm a pretty good person. I'm slow to forgive and quick to remember when wronged. I'm ashamed to admit this.

That experience with Maria has deeply changed what I believe, how I will live. It's taking what I "know" and pushing it deeply into my heart and changing me. I'm grateful for an experience that is shaping my understanding of a fully forgiving heart.

I went to Africa to serve Jesus in the golf community, and it was a "successful" trip in every way. But God's purpose was to change me into a more forgiving son of His. And He did it in a loving way that (hopefully) will stay with me the rest of my life. Amen.

I encourage you to meditate upon Matthew 18:21-35 and Jesus' conclusion, "You must forgive your brother or sister with all your heart, or my heavenly Father will not forgive you." Might rock your world like it is mine!

Prayer: Lord! Forgive me as I forgive others!

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Pete Hiskey

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