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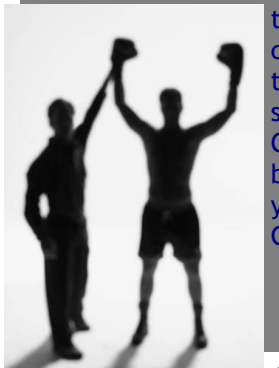
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Are We Hard-Hearted?



Luke 6:36: (NKJV) *Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.*



Anger, revenge and grudges! Sometimes our tolerance for others wears thin and we just want to...why we just want to let 'em have it! Let 'em know the heat of our wrath and the consequences for what we see as their wrong-doing and misbehavior. We want them to know that they can run but they cannot hide, for the long arm of justice will prevail! Now that that's been said, the question is, SHOULD that be the way we think and act? Is there ever a time when we as Christians "take off the gloves" and show the full force of our dissatisfaction? This weekend, being the ninth anniversary of 9/11, we thought it appropriate to not only assess our position nine years later, but also to try and understand some current events and put it all in the context of God, tolerance, hard-heartedness and forgiveness.

Our Only Question for consideration:

What would Jesus do?

(Source on September 11 used throughout the program: www.jotzen.com/tribute; written quotes from Peggy Noonan's Wall Street Journal Editorial page from 9/8/06.)

Flight 93 flight attendant Ceecee Lyles, 33 years old, in an answering-machine message to her husband: "Please tell my children that I love them very much. I'm sorry, baby. I wish I could see your face again."

Captain Walter Hynes of the New York Fire Department's Ladder 13 dialed home that morning as his rig left the firehouse at 85th Street and Lexington Avenue. He was on his way downtown, he said in his message, "I don't know if we'll make it out. I want to tell you that I love you and I love the kids."

Todd Beamer of United flight 93 wound up praying on the phone with a woman he'd never met before, a Verizon Airfone supervisor named Lisa Jefferson. She said later that his tone was calm. It seemed as if they were "old friends," she later wrote. They said the Lord's Prayer together. Then he said "Let's roll."

2,991 people lost their lives that day. So what do you do now?

FIRST WE MOURN... The following is the mourning of Job and his three friends: Job 2:11-13: It is appropriate to enter into the suffering of another. Job's friends sat with him a week before saying a word!

...THEN WE ADJUST. We learn to live with the loss, which can be a difficult and even an almost insurmountable task. At some point, the matter of forgiveness inevitably comes up. Forgiveness doesn't mean everyone should be able to get away with anything. As Christians, we are responsible to live a life that has a forgiving attitude. But what does forgiveness accomplish?

Forgiven: Strongs #863 - to send forth, away.

This word is very broadly used, addressing both Godly and human-to-human forgiveness.

Forgiveness: Strongs #859 - - freedom, pardon (as if the sins had never been committed)

This word is never used in connection with us forgiving one another - it is only related to the pardon granted through Jesus sacrifice. This is an important distinction to make.

Forgive: Strongs #630 - to free, relieve, release, dismiss, let die, pardon, divorce

This is broadly used but rarely translated as "forgive."

Forgiving: Strongs #5483 - favor

This word is broadly used in the sense of having a big heart *in spite of* sin, not -taking away sin.

So, looking at the words that relate to our forgiveness of one another, what can we learn?





We MUST learn to forgive as we have been forgiven: this concept is often repeated throughout the New Testament - All three words that apply to us for forgiveness are used to describe our responsibility.

Matthew 6:9-15: Next Jesus, after the model prayer, explains the part that would be hardest for us to get. If you don't have that forgiving attitude, your Father is not able to forgive you. But how does this tie into the callousness of the tragedy of 9/11...?

This program begins a discussion about the Floridian minister who threatened to burn Korans to "commemorate" 9/11, including audio excerpts from ABC Nightline on September 7, 2010



Matthew 7:1-5: We don't want our anger to dictate to our reason; rather, we want our reason to dictate our anger. Emotions can be dangerous. When we base our actions on our emotions, we can run into trouble. If we are going to be measuring it out to others, expect it back from God in the same fashion. We need to think before we judge. We aren't saying Christian judgment is inappropriate; what we are saying is it needs to be based upon solid principles and the question, "What would Jesus do?"

Is there a difference between a right and a responsibility? Yes there is. If I claim to be a Christian and want to do something such as burn a Koran, I may have a legal right to do so in this country, but do I have a moral right due to the Christianity I profess?

Christian principles of the treatment of others: 1 Corinthians 8:4-9: Corinth was a center for Paganism when Paul was writing to this church. Everyone, though, didn't see things the same as the Christians there. The principle is that yes we have rights, but we also have responsibilities. Sometimes our responsibilities are higher and outweigh our rights. Just because you can, doesn't mean you should.

What is our *responsibility* when dealing with different faiths, especially those that come from a different paradigm?

We believe that from a Christian standpoint, this minister needlessly was out of line, because that's not the way we are taught by Scripture to deal with one another.

Matthew 5:43-45: This is what Jesus would do! Obviously we cannot live this text unless we have a forgiving attitude of heart. Can we "expect" others to do as we do? Where do we draw the line to find the proper Christian response?

The entire world has reacted to this minister laying down the gauntlet, declaring a Holy War on Islam.

This program will not try to interpret the Koran, and we are asking that our Muslim friends not to try to interpret the Bible. If you are steeped in the Koran, you are not going to understand the Bible, and vice-versa. Either taken out of context can be detrimental and will not be an accurate representation.

The minister stated he was willing to die for this message.

What is the message that we *should* be willing to die for, in the words of Jesus? John 15:12-13 Matthew 5:5 Matthew 5:7 Matthew 5:9 Matthew 5:11-12: This is not a message of offense, or of telling others off. It is a message of self-development and self-sacrifice. Jesus taught us that forgiveness is the required principle of a Christian. Matthew 5:14-16: Men should see our good works.



Use our freedom for serving others, not self-aggrandizement. Galatians 5:13: (KJV) *For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*



We must learn to distinguish between what is sacred from what is profane. Leviticus 10:1: (KJV) *And...the sons of Aaron...offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not.*

As Christians we may have rights, but our responsibility is to rise above the rights so that we can determine that which is sacred versus that which is profane, and only act upon that which is sacred. Proverbs 15:1-4: Verse 3 assures us that God is bigger than all of this. He sees it and His plan is working itself out over time.



Sometimes this takes longer than we think it should be, and we take matters into our own hands. This is profane, not sacred.

Shouldn't we be mad that God is being misrepresented?

When the Apostle Paul went to Mars Hill, he walked through an incredibly idolatrous place where they were worshipping the Created and not the Creator. He took the good of their desire to believe in something and used it as an opportunity to teach them about the Unknown God. He showed respect and tried to enlighten them. Acts 17:22-31

Once again, Jesus clearly taught the concept of a forgiving heart: Matthew 5:38-42

Defend Christianity where it is being threatened instead of promoting the destruction of someone else's beliefs.

Find those things which are good and build upon them. Show people something greater, not smaller! Don't make God small! Do you think God doesn't know there are different religions in the world, or that He is misrepresented most of the time? Of course He does, and He will take care of it in His own time.

We can see that the concept of a forgiving heart has many levels of meaning, none of which are easily attainable: Learning to overlook a wrong (Matthew 18:21-22), learning to release it from our accountability (Ephesians 4:32), Realizing that we cannot actually pardon someone for their sins against us, but we can release them from their responsibility to us (Ephesians 1:7), and appreciating the actual pardoning of sin that Jesus brought (Hebrews 9:22).



"Angel 9/11 Remix," Sarah McLachlan

The forgiveness of God: Psalms 103:6-13

But didn't Jesus behave in a "radical" way?

Event: the cleansing of the Temple: John 2:13 -17 Matthew 21:12-27: The people were being cheated and Jesus seemingly reacts radically. But notice! Jesus turned over the tables - surely they were able to recover their money; he pushed the animals out - surely they were able to recover their animals; however, instead of releasing the doves (the only sacrifice the poor could afford), he told them to take the doves out. He doesn't set them free. He doesn't do harm to anybody, he simply stops the extortion and teaches them a lesson.

Event: The scolding of the Pharisees: Matthew 23:1-6 Matthew 23:23-24 Matthew 23:25-26



Observations about the common threads in all of this radical behavior:

- Jesus was addressing HIS OWN people - not the Pagans or the Roman citizens, but God's chosen people;
- Jesus was extremely firm;
- Jesus' firmness was not without compassion;
- Jesus' actions were just and for the good of those he addressed;
- Jesus' actions were not out of anger, but out of righteousness and love.

What would Jesus do? We see what he did. His behavior was for the purpose of reclaiming the Jewish people in their own context. In contrast, when face to face with the Romans, for example, he said nothing in his defense.

In Ephesus: Acts 19:18-2

Wait! Followers of Christ burned books about magic...? But look closely!

It says they brought **THEIR OWN BOOKS!** They renounced their previous way of life to take on the mantle of Christianity. They didn't take the books from someone else. It was their own possession that they once believed in and was their way of saying, "I'm moving up!"

Our responsibilities far outweigh our rights.



Our responsibility as Christians is not to react, but to rise above.

Our responsibility as Christians is to take on the thoughts and actions of Jesus and be loving, kind, compassionate and merciful.

Our responsibility as Christians is standing for something, but not tearing down others in the process. Jesus never did that.

Our responsibility as Christians is to live higher.



"Heaven 9/11 Remix"

So are we hard hearted?

For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...

Think about it...!