

*Divine love has a powerful, purifying influence. It is to be found only in renewed hearts, and naturally flows out to their fellow men.*

## Forgiveness

by Tanya James

This month our focus is on **Forgiveness**.

Forgive? That word is easier said than done!

But, are you aware that forgiveness is a requirement? Well, how do you do it? How do you forgive someone that doesn't even deserve it? In fact, they didn't even ask for it? You may have been violated - verbally, physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually - and the wounds go real deep. You want your violator to realize the damage they have caused you and feel the consequence of their evils. I have always felt that if they don't come to me acknowledging their wrongs and seeking my forgiveness, then they can just about not exist as far as I am concerned. I am perfectly fine not ever seeing their face again.

There is only one problem with my feelings. God says we must "forgive men their trespasses." Nowhere in this passage does it say, "When they ask for forgiveness, you must forgive men their trespasses." It clearly says that if you do not forgive someone for the wrong they have done to you, then God will not forgive you for the wrong you have done. *"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."* Matthew 6:14-15

How some of us may feel that we have it all together and we don't commit sin. We may have even asked God to "search our hearts" like King David did and when we survey ourselves, we find that we are walking upright, following all that God has asked us. Then why do we have such a difficult time with the scripture above? Are you aware that if you don't **FORGIVE** then you are walking around **UNFORGIVEN!** That is like playing Russian Roulette with your **SOUL!**

All it takes is for you to not wake up one morning... Or be in a fatal accident... Or suddenly cease to live... And what would

become of your soul? We take so much for granted and God, in His mercy, covers us in our ignorance. But there is going to be a time when that mercy will run **OUT!**



Also, unforgiveness holds us in bondage. Just the mention of the violator's name causes your body to physically respond. You may feel anger, fear, spite, revenge, or some other kind of emotion, all of which affect you in some way. You give your violator **POWER** to control **YOU** - how you feel, how you proceed, how you interact with others, and so on. I like to compare it to a puppet on a string. Just think about it. When you jump into a "mood" all of your relationships are now affected and you can't even enjoy the rest of your day. You have been robbed of your total enjoyment for however long it lasts!

How do you get past those feelings that swell at the thought, mention, or sight of your violator? You have to **FIGHT** against the enemy but only with the help of God. You cannot do it in and of yourself. Your focus **MUST** be on pleasing God. When you have that in perspective, it won't even matter what anyone else thinks or says. You will do what is right because you want God to be pleased. You don't want to crucify Jesus afresh with your sin of disobedience. *The Desire of Ages, p. 310* states, *"But those who at any supposed provocation feel at liberty to indulge anger or resentment are opening the heart to Satan. Bitterness and animosity must be banished from the soul if we would be in harmony with heaven."* It goes on to say that, *"Satan is jubilant when he hears the professed followers of Christ making excuses for their deformity of character. It is these excuses that lead to sin. There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christ-like life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God."* *Ibid, p. 311.* You can overcome! Your experience with God has to be unique. It is customized just for you. Only he knows how you can do it, and as hard as it may be, do know that it can be done **IF** you are willing.

You have to learn how to love like God loves. True love is unconditional. That means that you love regardless of how the other responds. Jesus loved those who were crucifying Him, so much so that He asked God to forgive them further stating that they didn't know what they were doing. He **DIED** so that those who are killing and mocking Him may have a chance to go to Heaven and live in His house. That completely blows my mind!

Can I open the door of my heart to someone who violated my spirit? Forgive someone who has treated me badly and drug my name through the mud? Who has lied on me? Who has abused me? Who has literally crushed my spirit? What is God asking? He is asking us to forgive so that we may live a full and happy life, free from burden and anxiety.

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# Family First: A Mother's Forgiveness

by Marsha Peters

The story is told of a widow who was raising an only son. He was all she had in the world, and all of her attention was focused on him. He was the joy of her life, and she was the dotting mother.



As he got older, he felt smothered by his mother's attentions. He wanted to get out with the fellas and do his own thing, but his mother nagged, and pleaded with him to watch his company. He didn't want to be at home anymore following mother's rules. A plan developed in his mind. He wanted to get away from home and see the world, so he decided that as soon as he turned seventeen, he would join the Navy. He would lie about his age to get in.

He kept his plans a secret from his mother because he knew that she would be terribly upset if she knew what he was doing. He decided that he would wait until the day he

was leaving to let her know, that way she wouldn't be able to stop him.

The day arrived, and mother walked into his room to find her son zipping up his suitcase. "What are you doing, and where are you going," she asked excitedly. He told her of his decision. "Why are you leaving me," his mother cried? "You are all that I have." "Mother," he said, "I must find my own way in the world, and I can't do it here.

Mother could see by his determined look that there was no use in trying to dissuade him, so she begged him to be careful and write to her, and he promised he would. With that he hugged and kissed his mother, and was out of the door and down the street without a backward glance.

The poor mother was devastated. Her whole life revolved around her son, and now he was gone. She prayed for him every day and clung to the promise that he would write. Every day she went to her mailbox to look for his letter, but every day she was disappointed.

She began to worry if he was all right. She worried so much that she became ill. She went to doctor after doctor, but they could find nothing wrong with her. Finally, one doctor asked her if she was worried about something, and the whole tearful story came tumbling out. He told her that she would be well when she stopped worrying about her son.

Meanwhile, the son had every intention of writing his mother, but he was enjoying his freedom so much that he put it off. The longer he put it off the guiltier he felt about not writing. Then he reasoned to himself that his mother might be upset with him for leaving and not writing, and maybe a letter would upset her further, so he didn't write at all.

Three years past, and it was time for him to re-in-list or go home. The Navy was not all what it was cracked up to be. He'd done some things he wished he hadn't done. He had seen some things he wished he could forget. He missed home, but most of all he missed his mother. He sat down and wrote:

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## Healthful Insight: Are You Ingesting Poison?

by Karla Bliss

Many of us would reel in horror at the thought of a person knowingly ingesting Bleach or Ammonia into their bodies, but many reading this article are ingesting daily doses of poison, not with a cup of Bleach or Ammonia but with the cup of "Unforgiveness." Are you suffering from spiritual poisoning? Is there someone in your life that you have aught against? Is there a possibility that you may have unforgiveness that you may not even be aware of? If so pause and pray the prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalms 139:23,24.

Many studies have been performed on the relationship of health and forgiveness. They show that those who harbor unforgiveness in their hearts against others have more health problems than those who don't.

Unforgiveness affects not only physical health but mental and spiritual health as well. Some of the health issues related to unforgiveness include high blood pressure, substance abuse, depression, chronic pain, increased heart rate and more.



Based on a health study, Prevention Magazine says, "Heart rates and blood pressures were 2 1/2 times lower when participants forgave than when they held grudges. Holding a grudge also made them sweat, a sign that their nervous systems were on high alert. Forgiveness left them feeling calm and in control. "Participants felt significantly more negative, angry, and sad during the unforgiving condition than during the forgiving condition," explains Charlotte Vanoyen Witvliet, PhD, assistant professor of psychology at the college (Psychological Science, Mar 2001). Prevention, Feb2002, Vol. 54 Issue 2, p38, 2p, 1c Prevention. W Bowels states that Emotional distress and mental depression produce toxic substances in the body that can be eliminated

only through total forgiveness, tears, lifestyle changes, and improved diet.

What are some signs that you may harbor unforgiveness? Let's name a few:

1. Does remembering a hurtful person or event produce physical symptoms such as tensing up, sweaty palms, increased heart rate, knots in your stomach?
2. When you think of this person can you honestly say that you wish the best for them? If they experienced hurt the way they caused you hurt would you secretly rejoice?
3. If you went to church or any other gathering and they were speaking, singing, or the presenter would you attend anyway or decline to go? Would you have a difficult time paying attention?
4. Paula Friedrichsen states that another sign of unforgiveness is **A hard heart**. She states, "Your spouse tells you they're depressed

*Continued at top of next page*

## Are You Ingesting... *continued from previous page*

about work, and you think, *Whatever...* She tells you the doctor says her cholesterol is dangerously high, and you think, *Whatever...* He tells you he thinks he may be having a mental breakdown, and you think, \*yawn\* *Whatever...* The inability for a marriage partner to care about what concerns their spouse is a screaming symptom that unforgiveness has caused their heart to grow cold." (This hard heart can be against anyone not just a spouse)

4. Do you have long lists of offenses that you hold against others and add to your mental list with each offense?
5. Do you go hours and hours, weeks, months or even years without speaking to people?



### Prayer of Forgiveness

*Dear God, Creator and Giver of all that is good in life, I don't want to hold anything in my heart and spirit which could block my relationship with You, or cause me to miss Your blessing or prevent me from becoming all You created me to be. I recognize I have often suppressed my feelings, not realizing they could fester and become poison to myself and others. Sometimes I have denied my real responses, pretending that everything was okay when it wasn't. And many times I have held on to angers and nursed irritations, making up speeches because I thought I had a right to feel the way I did. I confess there is much unforgiveness lodged in my heart. I don't know how to let them go, but I am choosing right now to forgive (Name the person)*

\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_  
(What they did /how they wronged you).

*I trust You, Lord, to enter the depths of my heart, and make forgiveness real in me. Please forgive me for the ways my unforgiveness has afflicted others and*

*grieved Your heart. Enable me to identify compassionately with the pain others feel. By Your grace I ask for a blessing of love and well-being for those who have hurt and injured me. Amen.*

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*"Did you know that you can add years to your life by keeping an up-beat spirit, and also, that*

*frowning brings on premature aging? Just something to think about!!*

## Quotes of the Month

*"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."*

~Mahatma Gandhi

*"There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness."*

~Josh Billings

## I Believe I'll Testify!

by Derek Peters

*"Then said Jesus, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."* Luke 23:24. In His prayer on the cross, Jesus refers to both the Romans and the Jews, who had been instrumental in condemning and crucifying Him. In a broader sense, His prayer also includes all sinners to the end of time, for all are guilty of the blood of Jesus.

The wonderful concepts of forgiveness, mercy, and self-sacrificing love are solidly intertwined. Together they represent the central theme of Christ's mission here on earth, and His grand plan of salvation for fallen humanity.

In ministering to the physically and spiritually sick, Jesus often uttered these words, *"Thy sins be forgiven thee. Go and sin no more!"* How thrilling it must have been for the recipients of His mercy to not only be healed physically, but to also have the heavy burden of guilt lifted from their shoulders as our Lord with great compassion offered those words of hope and reassurance.

The strange irony though, my friends, is that we as Christians today still battle with forgiveness and our unwillingness to forgive. Consequently we live unfulfilled lives. We are miserable and enslaved - held captive by our own refusal to let go of old or perceived wrongs. Our families are divided, our churches are divided, and this is exactly where Satan would have us to be. We too, are a "stiff-necked generation" in refusing to forgive.

Peter came to Jesus with that famous question, *"Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"* Jesus said unto him, *"I say not unto thee, until seven times; but until seventy times seven."*

Matt. 18: 21-22. The numbers quoted are symbolic, for the truth that Christ sought to impart him is that forgiveness is not a matter of mathematics or legal regulations, but an **attitude**. True forgiveness is not limited by numbers; furthermore, it is not the act that counts, but the **spirit** that prompts the act. *"Nothing can justify an unforgiving spirit."* (COL 251) Forgiveness, on the part of God or man, is much more than a judicial act: It is a restoration of peace where there has been conflict.

Just recently, a ceremony was held at the White House, where the Medal of Honor, the nations highest award for bravery in battle, was presented to several recipients. One was awarded posthumously by President Bush to the parents of a young army specialist from Pennsylvania.

While on patrol in a combat zone, a hand grenade was lobbed into the compartment of the Humvee in which he was riding. Frozen with horror, his three other crewmembers recounted how he, in the flash of a moment threw his body over the grenade and absorbed the blast of the explosion, thus, sacrificing his life to save theirs.

The Bible says, *"Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."* I fully believe that it is also true that greater love hath no man than he who is able to forgive his brother or sister for wrong-doing.

As we contemplate God's mercy let us nurture and practice loving, helping, restorative acts of forgiveness that will rightly represent our Heavenly Father and make Him proud of us His children.

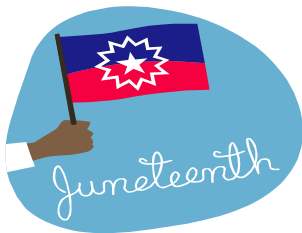
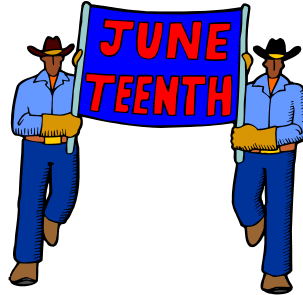
# Holiday Feature: Juneteenth

How many of us have heard of Juneteenth? Do you know what it is?



Juneteenth is the name for a holiday celebrating June 19, 1865, the day when Union soldiers arrived in Texas and spread the word that President Lincoln had delivered his Emancipation Proclamation. News traveled so slowly in those days that Texas did not hear of Lincoln's Proclamation, which he gave on January 1, 1863, until more than two years after it was issued!

The proclamation declared "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free." Thus, the Emancipation Proclamation was limited in many ways. It applied only to states that had seceded from the Union, leaving slavery untouched in the loyal border states. It also expressly exempted parts of the Confederacy that had already come under Northern control. Most important, the freedom it promised depended upon Union military victory.



Although Juneteenth has been informally celebrated each year since 1865, it wasn't until June 3, 1979, that Texas became the first state to proclaim Emancipation Day (Juneteenth) an official state holiday. But it is much more than a holiday. Juneteenth has become a day for African Americans to celebrate their freedom, culture, and achievements. It is a day for ALL Americans to celebrate African American history and rejoice in their freedom.

*Taken from:americaslibrary.gov*

## The Jar

The preacher placed two identical jars on the table next to the pulpit. He quoted I Sam. 16:7, "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." "These jars came from the same factory, were made of the same materials, and can hold the same amount. But they are different," he explained.

Then he upset one and it oozed out honey. He turned over the other, and vinegar spilled out. "When a jar is upset, whatever is in it comes out. Until the jars were upset, they looked alike. The difference

lay within, and could not be seen. When they were upset, their contents were revealed.



Until we are upset we put on a good front. But when we are upset, we reveal our innermost thoughts and attitudes, for "out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Lk. 6:45). What if someone tipped you over today? What would flow out? Would you reveal the "honey" of grace and patience, or the "vinegar" of anger and sarcasm? "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8). Have a terrific day

knowing that the one who upsets you may be just looking for some honey.



## Forgiveness

Brenda Terrell

*When a hurtful word is spoken  
Or an unkind deed is done  
I always must remember  
I am not the only one  
Who has ever been mistreated  
Stepped upon or pushed aside  
By thoughtless harmful actions  
Or selfish hateful pride.*

*The world is full of people  
Who purposely abuse  
Who lie and cheat and slander  
And manipulate and use  
Anyone and everyone  
Who might get in their way  
Of success or fame or power;  
No price too big to pay.*

*God's word is clear and simple  
About what I must do  
When I have been offended  
By friend or foe's misused:  
"Forgive...and be forgiven"  
I dare not keep a score--  
Seventy times seven  
Times seven hundred more.*

*When I am unforgiving,  
The battle I'll not win;  
For I need my Father's mercy  
To blot out all my sin.  
Forgiving is not easy  
Yet I know it can be done:  
I look to Christ my Savior,  
The Holy, Sinless One.*

*When Jesus died upon the cross  
His words rang clear and true,  
"Father, please forgive them,  
For they know not what they do."  
As the Precious Lamb of God  
Christ wants me to see:  
Forgiving is the power  
That sets my spirit free!  
Forgiveness is God's wondrous gift  
That sets my spirit free!*

## Holiday Feature: History of Father's Day



Father's Day, contrary to popular misconception, was not established as a holiday in order to help greeting card manufacturers sell more cards.

In fact when a "father's day" was first proposed there were no Father's Day cards!

Mrs. John B. Dodd, of Washington, first proposed the idea of a "father's day" in 1909. Mrs. Dodd wanted a special day to honor her father, William Smart. William Smart, a Civil War veteran, was widowed when his wife (Mrs. Dodd's mother) died in childbirth with their sixth child. Mr. Smart was left to raise the newborn and his other five children by himself on a rural farm in eastern Wash-

ington state. It was after Mrs. Dodd became an adult that she realized the strength and selflessness her father had shown in raising his children as a single parent.

The first Father's Day was observed on June 19, 1910 in Spokane, Washington.

At about the same time in various towns and cities across American other people were beginning to celebrate a "father's day."

In 1924 President Calvin Coolidge supported the idea of a national Father's Day. Finally, in 1966, President Lyndon Johnson signed a presidential proclamation declaring the 3rd Sunday of June as Father's Day.



Father's Day has become a day to not only honor your father, but all men who act as a father figure. Stepfathers, uncles, grandfathers, and adult male friends are all honored on Father's Day.

Source: [www.holidays.net](http://www.holidays.net)

## Inspiration



**An Evening Prayer**  
By Maude Battersby

If I have wounded any soul today,  
If I have caused one foot to go astray,  
If I have walked in my own willful way,  
Dear Lord, forgive!

If I have uttered idle words or vain,  
If I have turned aside from want or pain,  
Lest I myself shall suffer through the strain,  
Dear Lord, forgive!

If I have been perverse or hard, or cold,  
If I have longed for shelter in Thy fold,  
When Thou hast given me some fort to hold,  
Dear Lord, forgive!

Forgive the sins I have confessed to Thee;  
Forgive the secret sins I do not see;  
O guide me, love me and my keeper be,  
Dear Lord, Amen.

## Forgiveness... *continued from page 1*

Read Matthew 5:8-12, 43-46. Sometimes it seems unfair that we have to do what is right. But God's word is true regardless of how we feel. God works with us in how we feel but it in no way negates His



requirements. His Word is still true and we still have to abide by it. There will be times when you will feel like you are being taken advantage of (what we call "getting the short end of the stick").

Sometimes it may even seem like we are the one that is always giving, always doing the right thing, always breaking the ice. You may get fed up with it one day and say "No More!", but God calls you "Blessed" when you follow His Holy Word and choose to do

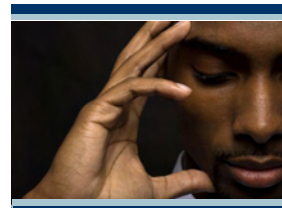
what is right in spite of... No, they really don't deserve it, but it is the right thing to do for your own salvation. You don't deserve God's mercy, but yet you receive it every morning.....

So now, the ball is in your court. What is your next move?

Please read the following scriptures. Meditate on the words and pray that God will give you a willing heart.

Matthew 18:21-35  
Matthew 6:14-15  
Ephesians 4:32

## It Is Not Easy...



*Author unknown*  
To apologize,  
To begin over,  
To be unselfish,  
To take advice,  
To admit error,

To face a sneer,  
To be charitable,  
To keep trying, To be considerate,  
To avoid mistakes, To endure success,  
To profit by mistakes, To forgive and forget,  
To think then act, To keep out of a rut,  
To make the best of little,  
To subdue an unruly temper,  
To shoulder a deserved blame,  
To recognize the silver lining.

**BUT IT ALWAYS PAYS!**

## In Case You Didn't Know...

by Todde Bliss, Sr.

This world is very cold and cruel to all of us. From the moment we are born, the odds are against us in every way. You may have been hurt by a loved one who abandoned you at a very young age, or there was constant chaos in the home with no end in sight, or promises were never kept.

Maybe there were relatives that promised to pay you back, or siblings not helping out with a sick or elderly family member, or marriages spinning out of control, with extramarital affairs. Maybe the children are constantly making the wrong decisions even though they know what is right, or your teenager is hanging out with the wrong crowd, or you're being picked on due to your color, creed, or national origin.

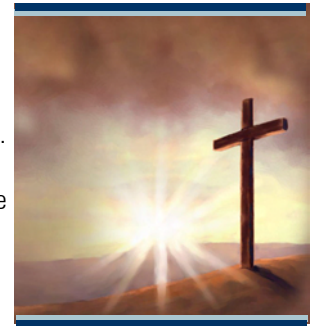


We as humans on this planet called earth have a hard time grasping the concept of learning to let go and let God. We would rather suffer a life time of sickness and sadness wishing and thinking what

if...or things could have been different if...and in the meantime that moment has been forever lost!!!

We consciously choose to do wrong to our fellow man, not to mention ourselves, and in the end we both come out on the losing end of the stick. Why not trade in our moments, days, weeks, months, years and decades of sadness into an eternal life of joy and bliss. What we have done to our fellowman is nothing compared to what we do to Jesus everyday of our lives!!!

...In Case You Didn't Know, we have a Savior that is ever waiting and watching with patience for us to let him into our hearts; who never judges, who never blames, who gives us more opportunities than we deserve, who meets us where we are, if we just seek Him with all our hearts. Most of all He made it clear on Calvary when He said Father, **forgive them** for they know not what they do. Jesus should be our only and greatest example when it comes to dealing with all people in this life. If you have this problem I urge you to sincerely do some serious soul-searching. Ask God for some guidance and direction in your life.



## Financial Tips: The Cuttin' Edge

By Anika Bozeman, [www.thecuttinedge.org](http://www.thecuttinedge.org)

Unless you've been living under a rock, you've been watching prices skyrocket. Gas, food, household supplies...you name it, the prices have risen over the last year. If you're like most Americans, you've been looking for ways to cut your spending. One easy solution comes delivered to your front door every Sunday morning – Coupons!

Did you know that your local Publix and Kroger grocery stores double coupons up to 50¢? That means that this week, the coupon shoppers got these items FREE: toothbrushes, dental floss, body wash, sour cream, nail clippers, emery boards and hot sauce. That's right, FREE! That's just the



free stuff! There are over 200 other products available for at least 50% off if you use coupons! By cutting coupons and using a proven shopping method, you can reduce your grocery bills by up to 90%. Grocery shopping is no longer a burden, it's actually FUN! It's exciting to see how many products you can buy for so little money!

The Cuttin' Edge Coupon Shopping Club offers monthly workshops that teach how to properly shop with coupons. Club members receive weekly Grocery Guides® which are roadmaps of what to buy at each store for maximized savings. Our unique coupon-shopping method has even attracted the attention of both local and national media outlets such as Good Morning America and News & Talk Radio WAOK.

High food prices? What high food prices when you're on The Cuttin' Edge? This week at Kroger, my original total was \$158.80. After swiping my Kroger card and coupons, I paid only \$21.31. That's an 88% savings! Any questions?

The Cuttin' Edge would like to invite you to attend our next workshop. Attendees

receive one FREE month of membership benefits with workshop registration. Mention you're a Renewed Hearts, Inc. subscriber and receive an extra two weeks! Until you're able to make it to a workshop, we'll leave you with the following tips:

1. Publix and Kroger double coupons up to \$.50 every day.
2. Only use your coupons on sale items.
3. Be open to trying different brands. Even if you've always purchased Clorox cleanser, would you be willing to try the Lysol brand if it's only 25¢?
4. Use your coupons with integrity. Don't cheat the system and block your blessings.

Associate yourself with a charity; once you start using your coupons properly, sharing will be EASY!

*Anika Bozeman is a stay-at-home mother living in Smyrna, GA. She has made savvy shopping her full-time job, using coupons to pay for everything.*

# The Least of These

by Nancy Franklin

Think about your family. Is there someone you just can't get along with, or one that you would spend time with even if you weren't related? How often do you look forward to seeing Auntie, Granddaddy, or the cousins you were stuck with at the kid's table on holidays? There may even be a couple of relatives that you would love to disown. Your family is part of what make you the individual that you have come to be. They teach you life's lessons, and influence the way you interact with your own spouse, children, friends and loved ones.

Now imagine if you had no family. What if your parents or siblings weren't there to teach you how to share, deal with strangers, ride a bike, get dressed up for special occasions , etc. How do you learn those things? What if there was no source of unconditional love, no consistent rules, no effort to give you 'home training', no shared memories? Unfortunately there are too many children in this country who are in that position. I believe the family is the basis of our society. So what happens to those children that were not raised with all of the benefits created by the institution of family?

My immediate family is blended. My husband and I live with 3 children; his 17 year old daughter from his first marriage and 2 adopted children. When the boys came into our home over four years ago, we expected their adoption to be finalized within 6 months. Instead it took up more than 3 years to give them our last name. During that time, we endured countless visits with their birth mother, their 2 younger brothers who were being adopted by another family, not to mention a grandmother, aunts and cousins that helped form their early lives. Now, even though they are finally legally our children, we know that we have a permanent

connection with their birth mother and her people, their birth siblings and their adopted father. Likewise, I will always have a connection to my husband's ex-wife. In fact, we often have his step-grandson in our home for days on end since he is close in age to our boys. If you had asked me 20 years ago, I could not even imagine having such a mixture to call my own. But today, it doesn't matter that none of the children share my D.N.A. I still have to feed them, help with homework, teach them right from wrong, encourage and discipline them. They are my family and I love them for better or for worse.

According to AFCARS (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System), as of September 2005 there are 513,000 children in foster care in the United States. Of that number, one third (114,000) of them are waiting to be adopted. These are the kids that probably don't have the support system to provide some of the things that help make children thrive; unconditional love, nurturing, support and stability. Statistics even show that children in foster care live in poverty more often than other children. The state is charged with providing the bare necessities for children in their care, but too often we see news reports about the children that fall through the cracks to suffer abuse, neglect or exploitation worse than what may have placed them in foster care in the first place.

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells his disciples what to expect by using parables. Matthew 25:40 summarizes his parable by saying "...I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." I believe that children are the 'least of these', especially those that do not have a loving family to care for them. Children do

not have the mental or physical ability to protect themselves, and have few legal rights. Even through



adolescence, they have to depend on others to provide for them, make good decisions, and give them guidance. When a child's immediate family is unwilling or unable to care for them, shouldn't some of us be willing to take up the slack to provide for their wellbeing and future? Or are we willing to suffer the consequences of dealing with those who were not socialized in the cooperative environment of the family.

I can say from experience that being the primary caretaker for a child has provided me with much more than I give. Despite the daily difficulties that my husband and I experience, there is the satisfaction of watching them blossom and knowing that our kids don't have to struggle for life's necessities. The question of who they were born to is such an unimportant detail. Yes it is a sacrifice, but nowhere near the magnitude of the sacrifice that Jesus made for me. They return the love I give a thousand fold. Who of us cannot use more love?

If you can't foster, why not become a scout leader, a school volunteer, or a sports coach; feed the hungry or become more active in your church or your community. And although working with a child in need will not guarantee you a place on the right hand of the Father, think of it as the ultimate opportunity to witness. Why not try to do something each day for someone who is without?

*Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

## Useful Resources

This is a list of information that may be useful for you, your friends, or your families:

### Families

[Foundation for Men's Awareness](http://www.fmainc.org) - www.fmainc.org

[National Fatherhood Initiative](http://www.fatherhood.org) - www.fatherhood.org

[Safe Families](http://www.safefamilies.org) - www.safefamilies.org

[Women's Ministry: Revive Our Hearts](http://www.reviveourhearts.com) - www.reviveourhearts.com

### Life Coaching

[Redemptive Life Coaching](http://www.redemptivelifecoaching.com) - www.redemptivelifecoaching.com

### Finances

[Mind Your Finances](http://www.mindyourfinances.com) - www.mindyourfinances.com

[Our Family finances](http://www.ourfamilyplace.com) - www.ourfamilyplace.com

### Health

[Family Doctor](http://www.familydoctor.org) - www.familydoctor.org

[Nature's Remedies](http://www.naturesnaturalhealing.com/sitemap.shtml) - www.naturesnaturalhealing.com/sitemap.shtml

### Music

[Gospel Lyrics](http://www.allpraiselyrics.com) - www.allpraiselyrics.com

[The Cyber Hymnal](http://www.cyberhymnal.org) - www.cyberhymnal.org

### Students

[Webster's Dictionary](http://www.merriam-webster.com) - www.merriam-webster.com

[Acronym Finder](http://www.acronymfinder.com) - www.acronymfinder.com

[Online Resource For Black College Students](http://www.blackstudents.com) - www.blackstudents.com

[Georgia Dept. of Education Testing](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/ci_testing.aspx) - www.doe.k12.ga.us/ci\_testing.aspx

[Georgia Dept. of Driver Education](http://www.dds.ga.gov/Training/index.aspx) - www.dds.ga.gov/Training/index.aspx

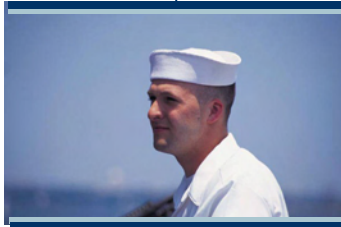
## A Mother's Forgiveness... *continued from page 2*

*Dear Mother, I've been a most ungrateful son, and I deserve to be disowned. But Mother my tour of duty is over and I want to come home. I love you and I miss you. If you own me and forgive me, hang a white sheet from the clothesline, and I will know that I am welcomed home. If I don't see the white sheet I won't bother you, I will just keep going.*

*Your Son*

Mother made her daily trip to the mailbox not expecting anything, but hoping against all hope that maybe this would be the day that she would hear from her son. When she opened the mailbox, she thought she saw a letter with familiar handwriting. It looked like her son's handwriting. She tore open the letter and read the contents, and burst into tears. Her son was well and he wanted to come home. She glanced at the day of his arrival and realized it was the next day.

Mother was so excited. She ran to the house, grabbed her purse, took out her wallet and dumped all the money out. She rushed to get her jar that she saved money in for a rainy day, and poured the contents out. She counted all the money and put it in her purse. Then she rushed out of the house and flagged down the city bus headed downtown.



She entered a large department store, and went to the linens section, and brought every white sheet she could find. Then she got back on the bus and headed home. Mother had never felt so good in all her life, and she believed it was the best day ever.

He was on the bus headed home, and it seemed the closer he got the bigger the lump in his throat got. Would mother accept him back? Would he see the white sheet on the back line? He knew it would serve him right if the sheet was not there. He had not been a good son to his mother after all she had done for him. He had not appreciated all her efforts to raise him on her own until he had gone away and seen what a cruel world it was out there. He wanted to tell her he was sorry - he wanted to ask her forgiveness. Would he get that chance?

The bus had stopped, and it was time for him to get off. He headed down the street toward his house. There was fear in his heart, and the lump in his throat grew bigger. His steps were slow and heavy. But when he was almost to his house, he thought he saw something white floating in the breeze. His heart skipped a beat and he began to run as fast as he could the rest of the way. When he got to the house he stopped suddenly. Hanging from every window in the house was a white sheet. He rushed around back and all the windows in the back had

sheets hanging from them. The clothesline was full of white sheets.

Just then he looked up to see mother rushing out of the back door and into his

arms. He tried to speak but couldn't because the lump was so big it seemed to be choking him, and the only thing that came out was a loud sob. "It's ok," she said, "Mother loves you, Mother owns you, Mother forgives you. Welcome home son!"

Over two thousand years ago, Jesus was stretched out on a cross for you and me just like those sheets that hung on the line in the wind. There is nothing that we have done that He is not willing to forgive us for. He says to you today, "My son, my daughter, Jesus loves you, Jesus owns you, Jesus forgives you. Come home!"

If you would like to support this ministry, please send all donations to:

**Renewed Hearts, Inc.,**  
P.O. Box 5474, Atlanta, GA 31107

**Check out our website!**  
[www.renewedheartsinc.org](http://www.renewedheartsinc.org)

If you would like to submit an article, a poem, or share a testimony, email us at:

[heartbeat@renewedheartsinc.org](mailto:heartbeat@renewedheartsinc.org).

All articles are subject to editing and may not be included in the current issue. However, it may be included in a later issue.

## Prayer Requests

Please pray for this ministry. Renewed Hearts, Inc. is a 501(c)3 self-supported, non-profit organization. If you have a request, please email us at:

[prayers@renewedheartsinc.org](mailto:prayers@renewedheartsinc.org).

Please pray for the following individuals:

- MG - was hospitalized due to an abusive situation. We have been unable to contact her. (missing)
- JP - Strongholds are keeping him away from God.
- Emma - Cancer. She is currently undergoing chemotherapy treatment.

- ETW - Marital Issues
- E & C - Marital Commitment Issues

Also, please pray for:

- Our family members
- Our Church members and our Pastors
- Our finances and the gas crisis
- The homeless and jobless
- Those who are hurting
- The youth and young adults
- A grant writer - to help raise funds in order to provide needed services.
- A facility for this ministry

## The News Crew

**Gary James, Tanya James, Derek Peters,  
Marsha Peters, Todde Bliss, Karla Bliss**



**The Heart Beat**  
Renewed Hearts, Inc.  
P.O. Box 5474, Atlanta, GA 31107  
[www.renewedheartsinc.org](http://www.renewedheartsinc.org)  
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