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RADICAL FORGIVENESS

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F R O M T H E



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Some are surprised when I say there are two types of forgiveness in the Bible. The first type of forgiveness is letting go of your past hurts by forgiving the person or persons who have hurt you. Most of us are familiar with this kind of forgiveness. You heard it in Sunday school and your parents told you how important it was to forgive others. You are not only to forgive seven times but seven times seventy. Yes, forgiveness is the keystone to Jesus's ministry of love and grace.

Now, there is nothing wrong with this type of forgiveness, after all, Jesus talked about it. But all too often, people fall into a trap of what I call a victim mentality. I think you know what I am talking about. You've been there and you know people who cannot move on in life because they are still living in the past.

The second level is what I call, radical forgiveness. Radical forgiveness is looking at life's hurts in a different way. Instead of focusing on the idea that you have been wronged, you focus on the truth that no matter what happens in life, good or bad, God's plan and purpose is still at work in your life. Therefore, you have no need to blame another person, because God has tailored your life with a plan and a purpose.

There is an amazing story in the Bible that illustrates this radical forgiveness in the story of Joseph, you know, the boy with a coat of many colors. His brothers sold him into slavery and told their (?)father that he had been killed by a wild animal. As destiny would have it, Joseph became a mighty leader under the Pharaoh, and when the famine covered the land, Joseph's brothers had to travel to Egypt to buy grain, where they came face to face with Joseph. Now, I don't know about you, but if I was one of Joseph's brothers, I would be shaking in my boots, wondering what kind of punishment I was going to get from Joseph. But here is where you see radical forgiveness in actions. Joseph looked at his brothers and said, "Don't worry or blame yourselves...God sent me here..." In Joseph's mind, his brothers did nothing wrong, his being sold into slavery was the plan and purpose of God to save his family from starvation.

How can you live this kind of radical forgiveness? It all comes down to simply and faithfully acknowledging that God has a plan and a purpose for you. By doing this, your victim mentality will become a thing of the past. Someone might think they have hurt you, but in God's greater plan, God has turned their actions into something good, allowing you to move ahead and attain happiness and success in life. As the Bible says, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

It has been said that the Navajo Indians have a ceremony for doing this. Those who felt they had been wrong would enter a circle of the wise Indian leaders and tell their story three times. On the fourth occasion, the Indian leaders would turn their back to the person and say, "Enough already! Your story is just a story. There's no real truth to it – it is just an illusion. We have heard it three times and we no longer wish to give it power. Let it go and then let yourself move towards what is really true."

Last, replace your old victim story with a new story of God at work in your life. You may have gone through a painful divorce, lost a child, or have health issues. Even during those difficult times, God is at work in your life with a plan and with a purpose. Someone once said, "God's way is better than your way. God's plan is bigger than your plan. God's dream for your life is more rewarding and fulfilling, better than you've ever dreamed of. Now stay open and let God do it. God's way."