

Conversation Starter

For the week of September 14 to 20, 2008

This week's theme: Complete Forgiveness

Reading #1: Genesis 37:1-28
Reading #2: Genesis 49:29-33 & 50:15-21
Reading #3: Matthew 6:14-15
Reading #4: Matthew 18:21-22

They mistreated him. They hurt him. They ridiculed him. They spoke poorly of him. They didn't like him. They plotted to kill him. They got rid of him by selling him to a group of Midianite merchants on their way to Egypt. In summary, they were just plain mean to him. (See reading #1.) Yet, when we fast forward many, many years later we discover that this man who was mistreated, hurt, ridiculed and sold didn't seek revenge, didn't lash out at them, didn't desire for bad things to happen to them and he didn't harbour unforgiveness towards them in his heart. (See reading #2.) And who was this man? Joseph. And who were the people that harmed him? His brothers. The story of Joseph demonstrates to us what complete forgiveness is all about. Joseph shows us that complete forgiveness is possible even when treated harshly.

Joseph's brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (Genesis 50:18-21 from reading #2.)

And why is it essential that we come to the place where complete forgiveness is in our hearts towards those who have hurt us? Listen to these words of Jesus said: *For if you forgive people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive people their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:14-15/reading #3.)* Ouch!!

1. So, then, what do you think about these words of Jesus? Tough message, eh?
2. Are there any people in your life you find difficult to forgive? Why do you find it hard to forgive them?
3. If forgiving someone seems impossible, how do you come to the place where you are able to forgive him/her?
4. Why is the need to forgive others so important to God/Jesus?
5. What keeps us from forgiving others?
6. How do you know when you have completely forgiven someone?
7. What did Jesus mean by His words that are recorded in Matthew 18:21-22 (reading #4)?

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