

Daily Devotional, February 4, 2021 Choose to Love Unconditionally

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. Luke 6:27-31 (NIV)

Our faith calls us to love: to love God and to love our neighbor. Christians are given the great privilege to love without exception. It is a high calling, yet a difficult one. Luke notes the breadth of love that we are called to, through these words that Jesus challenges us with in Luke 6.

In reading the words, “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,” I recall people whom I have read about whose lives emulate such love. One such person who comes to mind is Corrie Ten Boom. The life and faith of Corrie Ten Boom has been a blessing to so many people around the world. Corrie was living with her family in Holland when the German army invaded in 1940. During the German occupation, the Ten Boom family worked to help hide and smuggle Jews to free regions. Because of their efforts to protect and save so many from certain death, they were themselves arrested, imprisoned, and later sent to concentration camps.

Corrie Ten Boom and her sister, Betsie were sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp, just outside Berlin. In that place they would experience the evil of the confinement at these camps. The forced labor, appalling conditions, and harsh treatment of the prisoners led to almost certain death. It was at Ravensbruck that Betsie would die. Corrie was later released and returned home.

After the war ended, Corrie helped survivors of the concentration camps return to life in normal society. During this time, she also began a ministry that would become a global ministry, preaching around the world.

In 1947 Corrie's preaching brought her to Germany to preach. In her own words, she had come to Germany with the message, “God Forgives. When we confess our sins, God casts them into the deepest ocean, gone forever.” As she spoke this simple, yet powerful message she made eye contact with a man in the back of the room. After the service had ended, he approached her, and as he drew close, she recognized him as a guard at Ravensbruck.

Immediately her heart began to race and she stated, “My blood seemed to freeze.” This man who was once her captor was now attending worship with her. He told her he had recently become a Christian. He spoke of God's forgiveness and how grateful he was that God forgave, but he also found it important to ask her for forgiveness, as well.

I cannot imagine how difficult it was for her in that moment. How would you react? How would I react? Corrie took a moment and prayed to God for strength. Next she lifted her head, looked into his eyes and said, “I forgive you brother, with all my heart!”

What an amazing act of love! What a perfect picture of grace! She did not dismiss nor forget the atrocities that had taken place in Ravensbruck or in Holland, but she offered the same grace that God had already offered. When we choose to love, we open ourselves, and everyone involved, to the possibility of healing and freedom from the burdens that bind our hearts, minds, and souls. When we choose to love God and our neighbors, as challenging as it may be at times, we fulfill what Christ has called us to. Don't ever withhold it but offer it freely. You may never get another chance to free both of you.

Prayer: Lord, I come to You in prayer, asking You to guide my heart to love my enemies, even the ones who have hurt and harmed me greatly. Though my wounds are deep, help me forgive. May I remember the many times I have sinned against others and how I sought forgiveness, and You have always graciously forgiven me. Thank You for Your grace. Amen.