

Pastor's Corner

Practicing the Art of Forgiving

December 30, 2009

Dear Friend,

A few months back I was hanging out with my friend Clar, who's about 6 years old. She has an older brother, and like all older brothers I'm pretty sure he likes to tease. In fact, one day I asked her older brother what he's been doing on his summer break from school, and he thought for only a moment before he replied: "Pestering Clar." So when Clar was driving in our car one day, I asked her, "How has your summer been?" "Fine!" "Has your brother been pestering you?" "Yes." "What does he do to pester you?" "I forgot." She forgot? I know she's not old enough to start getting a bad memory like the rest of us old folks, and so I thought I'd help her to remember a little. "Does he take your books?" "I can't remember." "Does he lock you out of his room?" "I can't remember." "So does he pester you?" "Yes." "How?" "I forgot." And she went back to her book she was reading to my wife, and that was the end of the discussion. But it wasn't the end of the topic in my thoughts. Clar taught me an important lesson that day. Many times we think we can't forget something, which is pretty true. But we can choose not to remember. And this is what Clar was doing. Instead of concentrating on the little annoyances of her brother, she chose to not remember them and think about them. There was more to her summer to think about than his pestering her. So she thought about other things, and "forgot" his pestering.

It seems to me that God does this as well. He tells us that when we confess our sins, He chooses to remember them no more. "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more." "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." Isaiah 43:25, Jeremiah 31:34. It's like if you where to go and ask Him a week after you have already confessed a sin and asked again for His forgiveness, "Will you please forgive me for such and such?" and He would reply, just like my friend Clar, "What sin? I forgot."

How can we reach the point of not holding onto little grievances and always remembering for years and years the things that others have done to us? Here's a little suggestion: Don't focus on the hurt or the unkind word or the pain; focus on something else. Clar doesn't get up each day and rehash over and over again in her mind what her brother has done to her yesterday, and last week, and last month,. She gets up and focuses on the positive, and as she thinks about the positive, she forgets the negative. And when I try to get her to think about all the things her brother has done to her, she refuses to dig up the past.

It's a lot like our media today. When it's a slow day, they will run and rerun and rehash some of the most insignificant and trivial news items. Like someone speaking out during a congressional hearing. We hear about it over and over and over again on the different networks. But if there is something else that comes up, like a natural disaster, or an airplane that crashes, suddenly we all "forget" about that trivial item and focus on the big news. And if some news anchor were to start rehashing the trivial matter over again, we would forget him and turn the channel. And it's the same with us. Focus on the things that are eternally important.

We are to keep our eyes constantly fixed upon heavenly things. We are to search the Scriptures, that with quick understanding we may discern the truth, and see the light, fixing the eye of faith upon the land that is afar off, but brought nigh by belief in the word of God. The common, earthly attractions of this life are to be eclipsed by our knowledge of spiritual things, that we may set our affections on the things that are above, and not on things that are upon the earth.

Let's "forget" the hurts and move on this New Year!

Mark