Forgiveness: A Bridge Worth Saving

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."
Luke 23:34

How important is it to forgive? Eternally important.

Welsh poet of the 1600s, George Hebert writes, "He who cannot forgive breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass."

Eight things I've learned about unforgiveness

1. Being unwilling to forgive is never helpful.
2. And revenge just doesn't work. Never….
3. Your unwillingness to forgive is a sign of unbelief.
4. It will ultimately destroy your character.
5. Unwillingness to forgive poisons joy.
6. It will set your mind to believing that you are more important than Jesus. He humbled Himself to offer forgiveness and you will not?
7. It negates the power of the cross in your journey.
8. When we are unwilling to forgive, the pain becomes an idol.

The pain is consuming to the person who doesn't forgive. We become stuck. We fantasize vindication. We look at relationships surrounding the offense in a possessive manner. We cling to bitterness as our beverage of choice. We talk about it to people who have no business hearing of it. We dream about going back, doing things differently, saying something more damaging, or avoiding the offense.

My unwillingness to love and forgive makes life about me and NOT the Incarnation of grace-filled Jesus who longs to abide in me.

When we forgive we forfeit our miseries and choose to live in the present. We no longer have the need to marinade in the poison of nurtured malice. We lose our self-important disappointments. We embrace everything that Jesus, on the cross, suffered to apprehend.

Choosing not to forgive is choosing to live backwards. Forgiveness frees up the energy it takes to bear the burden of anger indefinitely. Because God has forgiven all our sins, we should not withhold forgiveness from others.

One other thought about forgiveness-perhaps the most important one. It’s in the form of a question:

Have you forgiven yourself?

Lord, when You were on trial, You would not speak to save Your life. Teach me the art of trust and forgiveness even when I am in the midst of wrongs done to me. Teach me to speak grace and truth, not so much in a desire to be seen as right, but rather to humbly participate in the ministry of reconciliation.

> *The One who created life became obedient unto death.*