

FORGIVE AND FORGET Bruce Larson tells the true story of a Catholic priest living in the Philippines, a much-loved man of God who once carried a secret burden of long-past sin buried deep in his heart. He had committed that sin once, many years before, during his time in seminary. No one else knew of this sin. He had repented of it and he had suffered years of remorse for it, but he still had no peace, no inner joy, no sense of God's forgiveness.

There was a woman in this priest's parish who deeply loved God, and who claimed to have visions in which she spoke with Christ, and He with her. The priest, however, was skeptical of her claims, so to test her visions he said to her, "You say you actually speak directly with Christ in your visions. Let me ask you a favor. The next time you have one of these visions, I want you to ask Him what sin your priest committed while he was in seminary."

The woman agreed and went home. When she returned to the church a few days later, the priest said, "Well, did Christ visit you in your dreams?"

She replied, "Yes, He did."

And did you ask Him what sin I committed in seminary?"

"Yes, I asked Him."

"Well, what did He say?"

"He said, 'I don't remember.'"

This is what God wants you to know about the forgiveness He freely offers you. When your sins are forgiven, they are forgotten. The past -- with its sins, hurts brokenness, and self-recrimination -- is gone, dead, crucified, remembered no more. What God forgives, He forgets.

*No more lying then! Everyone must tell the truth to his brother, because we are all members together in the Body of Christ. If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin; and do not stay angry all day. Don't let the Devil have that chance. The man who used to rob must stop robbing and start working, to earn an honest living for himself and be able to help the poor. Do not use harmful words in talking. Use only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you. And do not make God's Holy Spirit sad; for the Spirit is God's mark of ownership on you, a guarantee that the day will come when God will set you free. Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults. No more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, as God has forgiven you in Christ.*

(Ephesians 4:25-32)

The price of hating other human beings is loving oneself less.

-Eldridge Cleaver

Before the heart can change, forgiveness must be expressed. Forgiveness must also be requested. For most people, it is easier to forgive than to ask to be forgiven. Yet the act of asking for forgiveness frees both people, and creates the highest possible purity.