



Bethel Christian Fellowship - St. Paul Campus: 1466 Portland Ave. St. Paul, MN 55104 (651-645-1534) www.betheltwincities.org
 Minneapolis Campus: 2727 Central Ave. NE Minneapolis, MN 55418 (612-217-4637) **March/April 2012; Vol. 10, Issue 2**

MONTHLY
THEME:

*The focus of this year's LIFEline issues will coincide with our recent sermon series: **Breaking Through the Roadblocks of Life ~ this issue will center on breaking through from rejection & unforgiveness to acceptance and forgiveness.***

Family, Faith, and Forgiveness

The whole idea of the family was God's, and it is one of His greatest gifts. The members of each family are bound together in body, soul, and spirit, and the family is intended to be a place of refuge, encouragement, and love. Yet with the fall from grace, it became one of many hotbeds of disappointment and dysfunction.

Joseph was born into the family that became the foundation of the Jewish people. He had ten older half-brothers all vying for a place of respect in their father's eyes. The favored son of the favored wife, Joseph found very little camaraderie with them. They rejected him and ridiculed his dreams, envying the place he held in their father's heart.

As a young man, Joseph did not appear to have anyone mentoring him in the proper way to share his dreams. His enthusiasm and immaturity did nothing to endear him to his family. They interpreted his dreams through the lens of anger and hatred, rejecting any possibility of his authority over their lives.

While he was on an errand for his father and far from the protection of home, Joseph was assaulted by nine of his brothers. Their hearts were set on murder, but Reuben's voice of calm and reason changed their minds. Instead, they threw him into a cistern while they ate their lunch and revised their plans, rejecting his cries for mercy. When the

opportunity presented itself, they sold him as a slave to a passing caravan of traders.

What were Joseph's thoughts as these things unfolded? Confusion . . . anger . . . fear . . .? *What have I ever done to my brothers to deserve this fate? How will my father be able to find and rescue me? What will become of me now? How could my God allow this to happen to me?* It is safe to assume that Joseph did ask questions. He was a young man, far from perfect. Based on the final outcome of his life, it is also safe to assume that he turned his eyes to God and placed his trust in Him no matter what his circumstances were.

God spared Joseph in the desert and set in motion the events that would shape the life of a nation. Joseph rose in influence in the house of his new master and came to the attention of his master's wife. When he rightly refused her advances, she responded with contempt and lies. He was wrongly sent to prison, his claims of upright behavior rejected by the man he faithfully served.

In prison, Joseph found that God not only spared him but also set him in a place of service. When two other prisoners were troubled by dreams they had, Joseph was able, by God's grace, to accurately interpret them. After the cupbearer was restored to his position in Pharaoh's court, he forgot his promise to mention Joseph to Pharaoh. Joseph's heart cry for release from his prison was rejected.

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MONTHLY
SCRIPTURE:

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

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Help and Hope for Acceptance and Forgiveness

Feeling rejected is not always the easiest feeling. Sometimes we also reject others. The Bible gives us scenarios that can help us learn how to deal with situations involving rejection so that God can turn them into situations where we experience acceptance. It helps us learn how to deal with situations of unforgiveness so that God can turn them into situations where we give and receive forgiveness

Rejection → Acceptance

Because of our flesh and our human weakness, rejection may look like the right thing to do at the present time. However, rejection between God's people looks very ugly and nasty. We see this in the scenario involving Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark. Paul and Barnabas chose to take Mark with them when the church at Antioch sent them out to proclaim the Word of God to places that had not heard the gospel (Acts 12:25 and 13:5). Mark was with them as their helper for a time, but he left them when they were in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13).

After Paul and Barnabas had completed what is known as their first missionary journey, they began making plans to go and visit the believers in the the places where they had preached. Acts 15:36-40 says that Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them again, but Paul would not move a mile with John Mark because of his failure to finish the race with them before. Both Paul and Barnabas were so upset that they "parted company."

When rejection happens, the heart is covered with darkness, and it becomes very dangerous. Rejection does not listen to wise counsel. Barnabas pleaded for Mark, but Paul said, "I told you, I will not go again with this man."

To reject others means that we do not relate to others with patience or tolerance. Rejection and pride are best friends. A quote about pride says; "At the deepest level, pride is the choice to exclude both God and other people from their rightful place in our hearts." Rejection causes us to judge another without compassion. Being judgmental is the result of pride, which moves us to criticize rather than give second chances.

An American proverb says, "Time heals." God, in His love and compassion, gave both Paul and Mark time to process what had happened. They were both children of God and witnesses in the kingdom of God, and the Lord gave them a medicine called "acceptance." After a long time, Paul decided to welcome Mark back. In 2 Timothy 4:11, Paul wrote, "Get Mark, and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry" (my emphasis). What an unbelievable turnaround!

When the love of God is present, we cannot resist. When God's love is present, our minds are shifted. When the love of God appears, acceptance finds its place. Acceptance is

not greedy or prideful. Acceptance sees the potential, the usefulness, and the competency of others. Acceptance covers and heals the deepest wounds.

One of the best definitions I have found for acceptance is in Romans 5:8-10:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Look at how God shows acceptance in Isaiah 65:1-2:

I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, "Here am I, here am I." All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations...

Who, except for God, is willing to seek for his enemies to love, cherish, and care for them? Paul realized the nature of God's love, that it is patient, and he wrote about it in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Through patience, Paul was able to eventually see change and hope for his friend Mark. Although he had been against having Mark journey with him, he reached a point where he was able to receive his brother back with love and great joy. Paul reflected and maybe prayed about the way he had ended his relationship with Barnabas and Mark. He learned to do what he wrote in Ephesians 5:1-2:

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

How is your relationship with your co-worker, your boss, your spouse, your children who have acted like prodigal sons, or your friends who have violated your trust? How long ago was that? I do not know how your situation is right now, but I do know that it is possible to fix if you listen to God and you realize your identity in Christ. It is time to dream differently. Do you feel the Lord bringing you new dreams?

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Unforgiveness → Forgiveness

Both unforgiveness and forgiveness can be defined by a simple and meaningful word: *distance*, both near and far. When we look closely at unforgiveness with worldly eyes and minds, we end up thinking we are right in a lot of cases. Being right sometime seems good, but sometimes it would be much better if we chose to give up our right to be right. When I use the word *distance*, it makes sense to me. Distance affects what we can see.

For example, when we are in an airplane that is still on the ground, we are able to see almost everything outside the window clearly. However, as the plane gradually rises to a certain altitude, our natural vision loses sight of many things. It is dangerous when we are not able to spiritually see the things we should constantly see.

In Matthew 18:23-35, Jesus told a parable in which a king forgave a servant who owed him a large amount of money. This same servant, however, was cruel to another servant who owed him very little. Jesus used this parable to teach us how much He Himself forgave us and how we also can forgive those who do wrong to us. The parable shows that if we call ourselves Christians and cannot forgive our brothers, sisters, and others, we do not yet know the power and the sweetness of Jesus' grace.

What is forgiveness? Earlier, we saw that acceptance is the medicine that heals the deepest wound. Forgiveness is the memory that chooses to forget the deepest hurt. Even though we may still have fears of being hurt, we have to forgive. The one who forgives is one who understands Jesus' love for us and also one who has received and applied the commandments of God. Jesus said, "You need to love others just as I love you."

Jesus sacrificed His own life for us on the cross. He paid the price we should have paid as the penalty for our sins. Because Jesus did this for us, we can love and forgive as He did. We need to surrender our lives completely to Jesus—heart, mind, and spirit—so that He can abide in us. We need to depend on Jesus and Him alone,

remembering His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane and His walk on the Calvary road.

Forgiveness is possible. In Genesis 33, we see an incredible act of forgiveness that brings reconciliation and celebration. To fully understand it, we need to read Genesis 27. Jacob had used deceit to steal the blessing his father, Isaac, wanted to give to his brother, Esau. Jacob sinned against Esau by taking his blessing (Genesis 27:25-30), against Isaac by lying to him (Genesis 27:19-24), and against God by using His name in vain (Gen 27:20).

Esau had wanted to kill Jacob, and Jacob had to run away from Esau. Now, in Genesis 33, they met for the first time since Jacob had so deeply wronged Esau.

But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept. --Genesis 33:4

When Jacob and Esau met, Esau ran not to kill the Jacob, not to choke him, but to embrace him and love him. He threw his arms around Jacob's neck in what is a holy hug and kissed him. They wept, and truly there is no greater picture of God's forgiveness. Jacob acknowledged his sins and confessed them, and both God and Esau forgave Jacob completely.

We are called to obey Jesus' commandment in John 13:34: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." Romans 15:7 says, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

How can we, the body of Christ, love, accept, and forgive one another? We can, by the power and sweetness of God's grace, follow the example of God and, in the words of Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

--Pastor Lidovick Pierre
Haitian Christian Fellowship

Family, Faith, & Forgiveness continued from page 1

Two more years passed before the cupbearer remembered his encounter with Joseph. After hearing of Pharaoh's troubling dreams and recalling his own, his testimony brought Joseph out of the dungeon and into the court of 'the king.

Joseph's life was one of service – to his family, to the captain of the guard, to his fellow prisoners, to Pharaoh, and eventually to the entire region from Egypt to Canaan. He clung to his God through all the storms of his life, refusing to allow the years of repeated rejection to embitter his soul.

Instead, he made room for the fruit of forgiveness to grow. He was a great blessing to his family, steeped as it was in dysfunction, and recognized that the hand of God directed his life, even through all the difficulties he endured. And he was able to encourage his brothers with these words: "Do not be afraid. . . You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:19-20). These were not just empty sentiments, but life-giving words of forgiveness and love. They restored his family to the place of acceptance that God had intended for them from the start.

The One who created families is also the One who redeems them out of all their sin and pain. He is still doing that today.

--Liz Kimmel

From Unforgiveness to Freedom

Unforgiveness is choosing to hold onto an offense no matter how slight. In our pride, we often see ourselves as victims. At times, we clearly recognize that we have unforgiveness in our hearts, but what if we aren't sure? What if the wound is too deep or the memory too painful? We can ask the Lord, and He will show us.

Forgiveness is something we cannot do on our own, but we can make the choice to be obedient. If we tell the Lord that we want to be obedient, He will honor our heart's desire to forgive. If we surrender our choice to forgive to Him, He will impart His very nature to us. In John 15:5, Jesus said, "...For without Me you can do nothing" (New King James Version)

The Bible is very clear about unforgiveness:

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

--Ephesians 4:31,32

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

--Matthew 6:14-15

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

--Hebrews 12:14,15

Forgiveness is a lifestyle, and the Lord has had me on a journey of learning about and practicing this lifestyle. I have been falsely accused three times in the last three to four years. One of the accusations was serious enough that I was interviewed by an attorney. I needed to forgive numerous people on an ongoing basis. The Lord reminded me of some things I had learned from various men and women of God. There is no formula to forgiveness, but here is what I what did to gain freedom from unforgiveness. I simply declared out loud:

I choose to forgive [person's name(s)] for [specific offense]. I forgive [person's name(s)] from my heart. In the name of Jesus, I release and cancel any debt [person's name(s)] owes me in this issue.

In my particular situation, I had to overcome the fact that I was forgiving people I knew I would have ongoing contact with. I couldn't avoid them. The Lord gave me an idea that ultimately brought me sweet freedom. He told me to bless

them! I began to bless them each day. I would seek the Lord for how I should bless them, and He would show me.

The more I blessed these people, the more God showed me His heart for them and the more He changed my attitude about them. The Word says: "*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse*" (Romans 12:14). The freedom is so sweet. I now pray for and bless these people on a regular basis. I have asked ask the Lord to alert me quickly when I am walking in unforgiveness. He is faithful to let me know right away. Now when someone offends me or wounds me, I forgive and bless that person immediately.

Here are some practical steps I have learned (and am still learning) to take to make forgiveness a lifestyle. Make a conscious choice that no matter how deeply you are wounded, you want to come to a place of forgiveness. Seek the Lord. Share your heart with Him, and tell Him how difficult this is for you. Surrender your hurt and the people involved with it to Him. Ask Him to help you see the people and the situation as He does.

In his sermon "Breaking Through the Roadblock of Unforgiveness" last summer, Pastor Jim asked us, "What are you holding onto?" In response to this, we must seek God and ask Him to show us if we might be harboring a "bitter root" of unforgiveness (Hebrews 12:15). We can ask God to help us forgive and thereby gain the freedom and peace that comes with forgiveness.

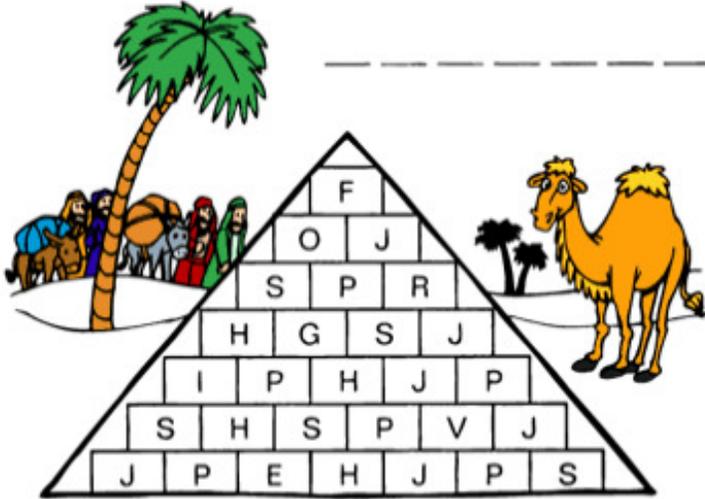
--Joan Krey



Be Like Joseph

Joseph's brothers were not nice to him. They sold him to be a slave. They pretended he was dead. Much later, Joseph became a powerful leader in Egypt. When the brothers needed help, they went to Egypt. What did Joseph do?

Use a dark color to fill in all the bricks in the pyramid that have the letters J, S, P, and H. Copy the leftover letters, from top to bottom, onto the spaces below. They will spell the answer.



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FUN PAGE

FOR

FUN KIDS

😊

Give Give Give Give
&
Get Get Get Get

What familiar phrase can you make from the words above?
Write it here:

Computer Glitch

BibleWise
Joseph in Egypt
—Genesis 41

Figure out which letter key is broken in each of the computer screens below. Cross out the Xs and write in the correct letters on each screen. Then number the screens to put the story parts in order.

#

Pharaxh had twx dreams that nx xne exuld explain.

#

Xo he called for Joxeph 'x help and dexcribed hix dreamx to him.

#

Josxph did wxll hxlping Xgypt and its nxghbors survixv bad timxs.

#

Pharaoth gavx Josxph thx job of prxparing Xgypt for thx yxears of faminx.

#

But thix cows axd worthless graix meaxt sevex years of famixe.

#

Jxseph said fat cxws and gxxd grain meant seven years xf gxxd har-vest.

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Adding It Up

Joseph's Family in Egypt
—Genesis 42, 45, 47

Joseph did a great job preparing Egypt for this famine. Even his own brothers traveled from their homeland to buy grain in Egypt. The numbers in this puzzle add up to a special lesson Joseph's whole family learned during a time of need.

Joseph's Jingle

1. _____ far away.
2. _____ to live one day.
3. _____ There he did grow.
4. _____ all to know
5. _____ is the key
6. _____ and harmony!

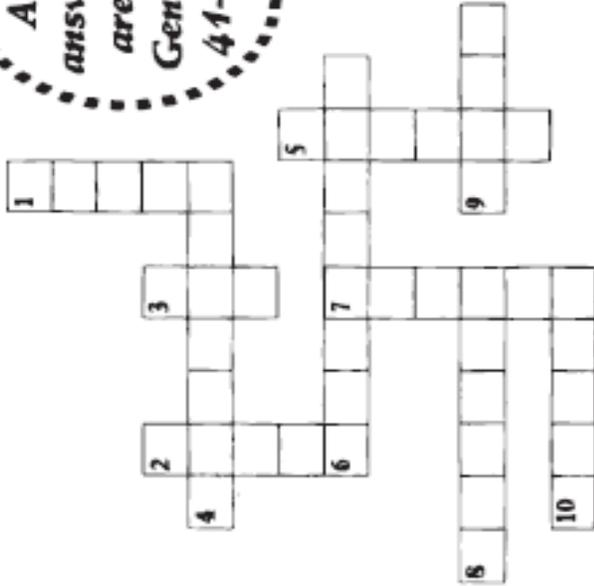
Work out each math problem, writing the answers in the boxes. Then use the final answers to put the lines of Joseph's Jingle in order.

- A.** $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = \square - 7 =$ There he did learn.
- B.** $5 \times 5 = \square - 19 =$ to peace and love
- C.** $12 \times 2 = \square \div 6 = \square - 3 =$ Down in Egypt,
- D.** $4 + 4 + 4 = \square - 8 =$ And now he wants us
- E.** $6 \times 3 = \square \div 2 = \square - 7 =$ Joseph went
- F.** $12 - 5 = \square \times 2 = \square - 9 =$ forgiving others

JOSEPH

How much do you know about Joseph?
Try the clues below to fill in the crossword

All answers are in Genesis 41-44



CLUES

ACROSS

- 4 Another word for a feast
- 6 Joseph's younger brother
- 8 There was a _____ in Canaan
- 9 The brothers wanted to buy _____
- 10 The brother who offered to stay while the others got Jacob

DOWN

- 1 The country Joseph lived in
- 2 Joseph's father
- 3 This was found in Benjamin's sack
- 5 He was put in prison while the others got Benjamin
- 7 The governor of Egypt

What was the name of the Captain of Pharaoh's guard?

A Woman of Vision and Prayer

(Editor's note: This is the first in a series of BCF Hall of Faith articles intended to help us recall godly characteristics of those who have walked before us at BCF and also to challenge us to walk in surrender to Christ as they did.)

It is only fitting that Almeda M. Engquist, BCF's founding pastor, be the very first person we honor as a member of BCF's Hall of Faith. As a result of a vision God gave her to open a gospel work in St. Paul, Bethel Christian Fellowship (then known as Bethel Temple Assembly) began meeting in a storefront building at the corner of Randolph and Snelling eighty-five years ago this month, on March 15, 1927.

BCF's church history, *The Chronicle of Bethel Christian Fellowship: 1930-2005*, gives a number of eye-witness descriptions of Sister Engquist and the ministry God entrusted to her as BCF's pastor. Wearing a white dress and a long, dark blue jacket, she would ask the women to take out their hankies and wave them to the tune of the hymn "Hold the Fort." Elaine Zellmar Olsen, the mother of BCF's Sue Olsen Hegstrom, sat under Sister Engquist's ministry until she was twelve. She remembers that Sister Engquist "was so magnetic. She could make an impression on children, and they loved her."

Miraculous healings marked the ministry of Sister Engquist. Elaine Olsen recalls one such healing when her father, Albert Zellmar, was chopping wood and cut his thumb almost all the way off. His response to this emergency situation was "Take me to see Sister Engquist," and two of her uncles did as he asked. In response to Sister Engquist's prayer, God healed Albert instantaneously, bone and all, and he had only a slight scar from the accident. One of the uncles who took him to Sister Engquist gave his life to Christ after seeing God manifest His healing power.

Under Sister Engquist's ministry, the church grew numerically and also as a spiritual influence in the Twin Cities. In 1935, the church left its storefront location and moved into a train coach that had been divided lengthwise in the middle and widened to make a Quonset-hut style building at the corner of Snelling and Juno. The train coach could hold about 150 people, and it was packed if there was a special speaker. The Sunday evening service was broadcast live over radio station WMIN. Esther Wittner, a member of BCF in these early years, said that "the power of the Lord was encountered [in meetings] in such a way that people came from long distances despite the Depression and travel time."

How did all this ministry happen? The answer really quite simple: Sister Engquist's commitment to prayer. Elaine Olsen says that Sister Engquist prayed from early morning until 9 a.m., again in mid-afternoon, and in the evenings



when there was no church service (there were many revival meetings during her ministry). She had a lot of home meetings, and Elaine's grandfather, Fred Zellmar, was baptized in the Holy Spirit at the Engquist house. Sister Engquist's constant, fervent prayers were "Send a revival" and "Save St. Paul, Jesus...Save St. Paul."

In 1943, after an illness of approximately two years, Sister Engquist went home to heaven to be with the Savior she love and served. Her husband, Charles, had started a wholesale meat business to help support their ministry, and he helped lead the church after her death. He wrote about the early years of the church in an article entitled "The House That God Built" and said, "A great deal of discouragement faced us in the beginning, but God had shown Mrs. Engquist and I that 'a great door and effectual [was] opened to [us], and there [were] many adversaries' (1 Corinthians 16:9, King James Version). So undaunted, we began the work..."

We honor Almeda Engquist, a woman of vision and prayer, who, with her husband, Charles, walked boldly through the door God opened to them.

--Ken Holmgren



CHARLES AND ALMEDA ENGQUIST
AND THEIR SON, CHARLES

Breaking Through Rejection and Unforgiveness

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
--Matthew 6:12

Picture yourself driving in your car when suddenly you come to an obstacle in the road, a huge tree lying there. You have two choices: go back the way you came or call for help to remove it. In the same way, we encounter obstacles such as rejection and unforgiveness in life, but with the Lord's help, we can move past these roadblocks into acceptance and forgiveness. I believe we need to ask God to help us remove these roadblocks. First, let's consider what these roadblocks and God's answers to them mean.

Rejection: *to discard, disown, shun or give the cold shoulder to.*

Acceptance: *favor, approval, willingness to receive.*

Unforgiveness: *the absence of forgiveness, to feel angry or resentful towards.*

Forgiveness: *the act of granting free pardon for acts committed against someone, or simply to set free or release (forgive).*

Why do we need to forgive? Jesus said, *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"* (Matthew 6:14-15, New King James Version).

One great reason to forgive people is that unforgiveness will take years off your life and sometimes your face. In my twenties, I would hold a grudge for days, and it showed. As I have become acquainted with Jesus, my attitude and countenance have changed—from sourpuss to saint! Luke 7:47 says, *"Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little"* (NKJV).

When I was five years old, my mother committed suicide. My three sisters and I spent the rest of our adolescent lives in foster care, and I suffered from a serious case of rejection. One foster mother told me, "Children should be seen and not heard," while the next one sent me to counseling because I was too quiet.

Have you heard the song "Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places"? That was my theme song. I went to all the wrong places, but never found love. You could replace the word *love* with *acceptance*. It took a lot of brokenness to make me realize that Jesus was the love I'd been seeking, "the love of a lifetime." Jesus was there all along, but I had worshiped idols instead of my Creator. Acts 17:30b says that God *"commands everyone everywhere to turn away from idols and turn to Him."*

Jesus offers unconditional love and acceptance. Unlike parents, spouses, or temporal relationships, Jesus is a faithful Friend. Proverbs 18:24b says, *"There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."* Jesus is a Friend who understands rejection. Isaiah 53:3 says of Him: *"He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we did not esteem Him"* (New King James Version).

Romans 3:27 says, *"Can we boast then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on our good deeds. It is based on our faith."* When we realize that Jesus doesn't base our worth on possessions or fame, it's like a huge weight being lifted from us. When we have been set free, we want to share that with others and introduce them to the Giver of that great gift.

I experienced a huge breakthrough at a prayer appointment one evening when I was encouraged to forgive my mother and myself, speaking aloud to the Lord. I did so, and in a few minutes, the Lord gave me a vision. I saw myself as a young child, sitting on my mother's lap as she read a story to me. The Lord was standing next to me, and He said, "See, your mother did love you." I wept as years of torment were washed away. Unforgiveness doesn't hurt the person you're angry with. It hurts you!

How do we break through the roadblocks of rejection and unforgiveness? We spend time with Jesus and let Him speak to us through His Word. *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"* (Ephesians 1:7, NKJV). Without Christ, it is difficult to walk in forgiveness and acceptance. Therefore we need to have a personal relationship with Him so that He can give us a new heart.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. --Psalm 32:1-2, NKJV

I would like to close with a short poem I wrote. I hope that it will illustrate Jesus' unconditional acceptance.



Continued on page 9

Fisherman's LIFE continued from page 8

Despised and rejected, acquainted with grief, (Isaiah 53:3)
Compassion, acceptance, Jesus offered a thief. (Luke 23:40-43)
Near a village, this leper, advanced in disease, fell to the ground,
Begged Jesus, "Please,
If you want, you can heal me."
"I do," Jesus said.
It was so, and that day, a new life he led. (Luke 5:12-13)
And she, who was caught in her lover's embrace,
They brought before Jesus, to be put in her place.
Yet, when she looked in His eyes, she saw only favor;
She accepted the love and forgiveness He gave her. (John 8:3-11)
Jesus accepts,
Forgives,
And makes whole;
He offers a gift to each precious soul;
Life eternal,
His peace,
And joy beyond measure; (John 3:16, Romans 5:13)
A hunger for heaven,
Invaluable treasure. (Matt. 6:19-21)

For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."
--Hebrews 13:5b, NKJV

--Roberta Dahlby



The Gracious Sum of God's Math

You'll find that God's arithmetic is simple and complex.
It won't confound and isn't something that is meant to vex.
Two plus two will always equal four, so here we go –
Do this math and God's own nature will begin to show.

2 leave your past behind you and 2 give up former ways
Is what you do when you 4-sake your nature and obey.

2 give up your resentment and 2 pardon someone's sin
Is how you can 4-give, through grace that God has placed within.

2 overlook a grievance, 2 omit the consequence
Is what you do when you 4-get another's grave offense.

2 strengthen those around you and 2 offer them support
Is what you do to 4-tify when help has fallen short.

A child will learn quite young that two plus two will equal four.
And all these *fours* will help propel you to God's open door.
Forsake your sin, forgive your friends, and then forget the pain,
And fortify your friendships with the love that you will gain.

--Liz Kimmel

Patterns

Look at nature and you'll see
Patterns and diversity:
Lots of shapes and graceful lines
All a part of God's design.
Masterful in His technique;
Everything you see, unique.
You are part of His great plan
A gift to us from His loving hand!

--Liz Kimmel

Good advice from Romans 12:

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.
Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.
Honor one another above yourselves.
Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
Share with God's people who are in need.
Live in harmony with one another.

My Journey from Rejection to Acceptance, Unforgiveness to Forgiveness

My battle with the spirit of rejection has been long and arduous. Those who have heard my testimony know that my parents divorced when I was three years old. At that time, my biological father disappeared from my life. This was followed by a distant relationship with my step-father, whose marriage to my mother also ended in divorce. Later, when I became a Christian, I would discover how much this had wounded me emotionally. I had become a spiritual orphan, abandoned, and my self-image was destroyed.

As I look back on this time, I realize how the Lord was drawing me even before I was a Christian. He began to reveal Himself to me as my Father in heaven. In John 14:18, Jesus said, *"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you"* (New King James Version). The Father took me on a journey of discovery to learn about Him and about Jesus. I didn't accept my step-father's offer to adopt me; I just took his last name. The Lord, however, wanted me to accept His invitation.

When I accepted Jesus into my life, He accepted me (no strings attached!), and I became a child of God. God's name is written on our foreheads, and yet we so often settle for less. We have been adopted into the kingdom of God! Are we truly living as God's children with all that entails? As Pastor Jim has said, "God loves us too much to leave us the way we are."

I had all the symptoms of an orphan spirit. A spirit of rejection sends thoughts to the mind, thoughts like "I don't belong," "My feelings don't count," "No one will ever care about me for myself," "I am abandoned," or "No one will ever love me." Walls of rejection include rejection itself, fear of rejection, self-rejection, rejection of others, and the expectation of rejection.

The Lord began to reveal and heal. In my childhood, I had quickly learned to stuff my feelings and not share deep hurts with anyone. My self-image was not very good. I put all my efforts into school. I developed a performance mentality: *if I only do this, maybe people will love and accept me*. I wasn't necessarily trying to be someone else. Deep down, I just wanted to be loved for who I was, not for what I did. The Lord has been speaking to me lately about just being and not doing all the time. He is still working on this.

God has been faithful and has healed me in countless ways through ministry or by sending people into my life to help me. When feelings of rejection come back, He is faithful to help win the battle. I remember a particular time when this hit home. One Sunday, I accidentally gave the church a check from my old bank account. I called my bank to make sure it was OK because I didn't really know what would happen. They said that the person to whom I gave the

check would get a notice that it was rejected.

The enemy could have come right there and confirmed my feelings of rejection, but God wouldn't allow it. Instead He came in with revelation. It was as if He spoke and said, *No! Your old account has been closed. You opened a new account!* I am a NEW creation in Christ. Isaiah 62:12 says, *"And you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken"* (NKJV). One day the Lord asked me, *Who do you say that I am? Who do you say that you are?* I realized that I had believed some lies about myself. That day, the Lord gave me a picture of a rose, and I understood that I am His sweetheart.

Throughout my healing process, I chose to forgive my father, my step-father, my mother, and even myself. When I was at home for Christmas vacation in 2007, I learned that my father had died on December 25. I knew that we are to honor our mother and father no matter what they have done to us, and the next April, I felt like the Lord was asking me to honor my father with an Easter lily, even though I had already forgiven him in my heart. I did not get to talk with my father face-to-face or meet him, but I felt like this was a way to honor him and that it was seen by the Lord in heaven.

I am so thankful for what God has done in my life. I now have a peace beyond understanding, and I am not stuck in the past anymore. God is returning to me my self-confidence, my sense of identity in Him, and my voice, which has been contended for since I was a child. I am beginning to speak up for my own needs instead of taking and accepting into my heart whatever comes at me. He has given me tremendous favor in my areas of influence. I have been in a deep place of worship for months.

God is even working in my family. Through my mother's third marriage, I now have a step-brother and step-sister. My step-brother is a student pastor, my step-sister is choir director at her church, and my mother and step-father continue to be drawn to the Lord. This past Christmas, we all went to church to hear my step-sister sing. I firmly believe that the Lord is returning everything the enemy stole from me. The great thing about the Lord is that we can even expect more!

When he prays to God, he will be accepted. And God will receive him with joy and restore him to good standing. --Job 33:26 (New Living Translation)

--Tiffany Good



Stories of Acceptance and Forgiveness

(Editor's note: When Denise Curley and Jolynn Swick were received into membership at BCF last December, they shared the following testimonies of God's grace in their lives. We believe that you will be encouraged as you read how they have experienced the ministry of God's acceptance and forgiveness.)

Washed in the Laundry Room

I came to Christ in 1987, in a laundry room. One of my co-workers started talking to me about how Jesus had died for me personally. Before that, I had known about Him. I knew He died, but I didn't see it. That day, I got washed in that laundry room.

When I was going through a time of being in the wilderness, I knew it was my season to find a church. I started looking around, and I looked and looked. I'd get discouraged and stop going. Then I'd look some more. I wasn't very happy with what I found, and there was also a lot of resistance.

One day I went into Menards, and a man of God spoke to me and said, "The Lord is telling me I need to tell you about my church." I'm like, "Oh, OK." I got the name and the address, put it in my pocket, and by the time I got out to the car, I'd lost the paper. I thought, *Oh, should I go back in? No, I'm not gonna go back in, I'd be embarrassed to do that.*

I thought I needed to wait on this. So I waited, and about nine months later, I was at Menards again. I said, "Joel [BCF's Joel Pokorny], can I have the name of your church again?" This time I didn't lose it. I put it in a very safe place where I knew I wouldn't lose it. Within a week or so, I came here. So I just thank you, Joel, for being obedient and helping me get here.

--Denise Curley

"He's Really Touched My Heart"

As you probably know, my father passed away in August. He'd been suffering for twenty-some years with COPD, which is a very bad lung disease. I got a phone call on the third of August to go to the hospital because he had had a heart attack. So I went down there and saw him with a ventilator in his throat and all these tubes, and I just freaked. I called my aunt and uncle and asked them to come, and they came from Pillager to be with me.

On the fourth of August, I asked them to pray with me. I said, "I don't want to be the way I was when my mom passed away in 1987." I was a very angry, bitter person. I wondered why God would take away somebody good like my mom. So she prayed with me, and I felt my knees buckle. I thought I was going to fall over, and next thing I knew, I felt some hands under my arms, lifting me up onto my feet again. I thought I had fallen and that I'd be on the ground by that time, but I was up on my feet! I physically felt hands under my arms.

I accepted the Lord on the fourth of August of this year, and I've been a totally different person. Anybody who knows me—I mean, really really knows me—knows that I'm a totally different person. I'm much more at ease with myself. I don't have that fear anymore. I don't really think I believed in Him when my mom passed away because I couldn't see Him. But I know He's real, I know He's real. He's really touched my heart.

--Jolynn Swick



Working Those Nets

Blogs and social networking are becoming ever ubiquitous. They are places where people get news, hear about events, learn new skills and hobbies, create communities and tighten communities already in existence.

Facebook is a great place to share news, remind people of upcoming events, and provide useful information about them.

Blogs are a great places to create dialogue, grow closer, and build community through the exchange of ideas.

Perhaps you didn't know that BCF had such websites. We do!

technology**LIFE**

The LIFEline blog:

(<http://www.bethellifeline.blogspot.com>),

The BCF St. Paul Facebook page:

(<https://www.facebook.com/bethelstpaul>),

The BCF Minneapolis Facebook page:

(<https://www.facebook.com/bethelminneapolis>)

All of these are great places to learn, grow, and connect. In the coming weeks, they will become stronger pillars of fellowship. Have a look-see and keep up on things.

--Matthew Hutchinson

ken's KORN ER

God Is Calling Your Name

After as many as six months of sub-freezing temperatures, the moderating breezes of early spring were always a welcome relief to the residents of my hometown in northern Iowa. Snowbanks that were sometimes as high as cars melted away, and green blades of grass began to appear on what had been a white—albeit dirty white—landscape.

The return of warmer temperatures caused many a student to experience spring fever, and one of the ways this was expressed was through the return of softball games. While I certainly welcomed spring and the freedom it afforded to shed my winter parka, I did not share the excitement that many of my classmates had for softball. My recreational strengths resided in reading the sports page or books about baseball stars. I really didn't care about actively participating in ball games, and that was fine when I could make that choice about ball games that occurred at recess or in my neighborhood.

It was another matter, however, when it came to my physical education class. Everybody had to be on a team, and everybody included me. Even though I didn't enjoy playing ball, I had to suffer through a process that went something like this. The teacher chose two good softball players to be captains, and these captains then took turns choosing who would be on their teams. As the captains called the names of my classmates, I almost always found myself one of the last two players chosen.

When the softball game actually began, I was usually one of the last two batters in the lineup. I often struck out, and if I did hit the ball, it rarely made it out of the infield. I was surprised the few times I actually became a base runner! When my team took the field, I was almost always assigned to the outfield. I was sure that I was placed there, rather than the infield, so I wouldn't miss the ball on routine plays that were usually easy outs.

These experiences, repeated numerous times between my fifth- and ninth-grade years, deeply etched an awful sense of rejection in my mind. I knew I did poorly at sports activities such as softball, but the pain of my athletic ineptitude was heightened because my classmates found it so difficult to

accept me as a desired member of their team. I was suffering rejection, and it really hurt.

I am thankful to God that He did not allow me to stay in that place of rejection. When I was a sophomore in high school, I took a battery of tests that reflected both my interest in writing and my ability to write. In the spring of 1966, my guidance counselor encouraged me to take steps in developing my God-given writing gift, and I entered a world where I was accepted because of it.

Far greater than this natural means of receiving acceptance from other people, however, is that the fact that God has shown me the great value *He* places on me. I have come to understand that I am valuable to God because He made me and He loves me. God does not reject me because of my inability to play softball well, and He does not accept me because of my writing ability. He has made me in His image, and He extends to me both His love and His good plan for me to know and love Him.

However, I have a problem. The presence of sin in my life creates a wall between God and me, a wall of rejection against God and His loving plan for me. If I allow this wall to grow higher and thicker, my sense of rejection from those around me will also grow. But if I, by God's grace, open my heart to receive His love and forgiveness for my sins, my wall of rejection against God will fall. This will bring me to a place where I will not need to live with the burden of rejection from others. Rather, as I experience God's acceptance of me as His child, I will be able receive His victory over the power of rejection from others.

Do you struggle with rejection? You can know what it means, in the words of Ephesians 1:6 (King James Version), to be "*accepted in the beloved*,"—accepted in Christ—by coming to Him just as you are. Turn from the sins that separate you from God, and trust Him to forgive you. God wants you to be not merely part of His team, but His beloved son or daughter. He places great value on you, and He is calling your name today.

--Ken Holmgren

There is an easy way to raise money for BCF Missions just by searching the Internet with GoodSearch.com. It's simple. You use GoodSearch.com like any other search engine — the site is powered by Yahoo! — but each time you do, money is generated for BCF. The more people who use this, the more money will go to the missions program here at Bethel.

It's easy to get started. Just go to www.goodsearch.com and enter Bethel Christian Fellowship Missions as your non-profit of choice. Make goodsearch.com your home page or add it to your toolbar...then search away! (Please note that image searches do not count toward fundraising AND, your search must be legitimate. You may not search for google.com on goodsearch. That is considered a fraudulent search and will not be counted toward our goal.)

You can also see how much has been raised by clicking the "amount raised" button on the main page. An average of 1 penny is donated for every search we do. Every bit helps!

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