



Forgiving like the children in the Kingdom

Forgive all!

Matthew 18:28-35

Matthew 16 Jesus said I will build My Church.

Matthew 18 Jesus shows **how to live in that Church** as a Kingdom.

Matthew 28 Jesus tells the **What the Church should do**.

Matthew 18 becomes the cornerstone for the church.

Jesus is building His church, but we need to know how to live in that Church Christ is building.

Matthew 18:1-5, Entering the Church.

Matthew 18:6-9, Caring in the Church.

Matthew 18:10-14, Protecting in the Church.

Matthew 18:15-20, Discipling in the Church.

Matthew 18:21-35, Forgiving in the Church.

Before the Church should do its purpose it should know how to conduct itself.

Matthew 18:21-32, *Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"*

²²Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. ²³Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. ²⁶The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' ²⁷Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

²⁸"But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' ²⁹So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' ³⁰And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. ³²Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ³³Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' ³⁴And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

³⁵ *“So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”*

Ephesians 4:32, *And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

A great injunction to forgiveness since God has forgiven us so much.

Christians who can't forgive each other and are devastating the lives of their little children.

Forgiveness sometimes comes so hard for us if we live in the flesh.

Now, our Lord in this passage is going to help us to understand the importance of forgiveness.

It shouldn't split churches.

There should never be the kind of unforgiveness in a church that shatters relationships and families and church unity.

1976, Simon Wiesenthal book *The Sunflower*.

Simon Wiesenthal a Jew under the Germans during Hitler's time. Wiesenthal was a prisoner in the **Mauthausen concentration camp in Poland**. One day he was assigned to clean out rubbish from a barn the Germans had improvised into a hospital for their wounded soldiers. Toward evening, a nurse took Wiesenthal by the hand and led him to a young SS trooper who was in one of the beds. His face was bandaged with puss-soaked rags, and his eyes were tucked behind the gauze. Perhaps he was 21 years old.

He grabbed Wiesenthal's hand, and he clutched it with all the strength he had left, and he said that he had to talk to a Jew. He could not die before he confessed the sins he had committed against helpless Jews, and he had to be forgiven by a Jew before he died. He told Wiesenthal a horrible tale of how his battalion had gunned down Jews - parents and children who were trying to escape from the house set afire by SS troopers.

Then he pleaded with Wiesenthal, a Jew, to forgive him. Wiesenthal listened to the man's story, first the story of his innocent youth, and then the story of his participation in the evil murders. At the end, Wiesenthal jerked his hand away and walked out in silence.

No word was spoken.

No forgiveness was given.

Wiesenthal would not, could not, forgive. He ended his story in the book with this question: **“What would you have done?”**

Thirty-two eminent persons, mostly Jewish, contributed their answers to his hard question. **They said Wiesenthal was right.** He should not have forgiven the SS trooper. It would not have been fair. Why should a man who gave his will to the doing of monumental evil expect a quick word of forgiveness on his deathbed. What right had Wiesenthal to forgive the man for evil he had done to other Jews?

If Wiesenthal forgave the soldier, he would be saying that the Holocaust was not so evil. “Let the SS trooper go to hell,” said one respondent.

That’s how it is out there in the world. But that’s not how it is in God’s family. We are forgiven and we are to forgive.

The inquiry.

V 21. Peter says, “How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?”

Unlimited forgiveness:

V 22. The Lord says 490 times, unlimited, endless, and continuous.

Matthew 6:12-15, where the Lord says that if you don’t forgive each other, He won’t forgive you. The example of forgiveness.

V 23. The example of forgiveness is a parable with great truth.

Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

The kingdom of heaven, the sphere of God’s rule.

God is the ruler, and He calls men to account.

God had given them the privileges with stewardship.

The king would appoint a satrap, a provincial governor. He was given a whole territory of responsibility in which he collected taxes, which then were to be given to the king for the operation of the kingdom.

Periodically the king takes accounting of those who have been given this responsibility.

Illustrative of every man who has been given divine privilege, who has from God life and breath. Every man is a steward of what God has bestowed upon him.

Every man will be drawn at a time and times before God to give an account of that stewardship. It's not the time of the great white throne judgment.

God, the king, then calls men into account.

He brings them before Him by conviction through the preaching of the Word, the reading of the Bible, the testimony of Christians, or a combination of any or all of those. Men are brought to face the reality of the fact that they have debt they owe to God. They are brought to conviction.

V 24, *And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.*

An unpayable amount.

A myriad is the highest term in the Greek language to speak of numeration.

It's an unlimited amount, beyond expression and paying.

Here is a man brought before God, convicted of a debt. The debt is a sin, and it is unpayable.

V 25, *But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.*

Man before God, facing his sin and knowing he has no resource to pay it. It is an unpayable sum to begin with, and he has got nothing to even begin to pay.

The king said he was to be sold, his wife, and his children, all they possessed sold, and payment to be made.

The total sum could never be paid. It was far too much.

The principle is clear.

- Men are brought before a holy God.
- They must give an account for the stewardship of life, and breath, and truth that they have been given.
- They will be convicted at that point of a sin debt that could never be paid and they have no resource to pay it.
- God has the power to deliver them over to judgment in hell.
- Although men cannot pay the full amount, they will spend forever in hell paying what they can pay.

V 26, *The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'*

- Here is a broken man.

- Here is a man who knows he is on the edge of judgment.
- He worships and affirms the sovereignty of God by calling Him, “Lord.”
- He recognizes the debt.
- He recognizes the justice of his sentence.
- He does not argue for justice.
- He simply says, “Please be patient and I will pay you all.”

He really doesn't understand the enormity of his sin.

It is not uncommon for people who are brought to moments of great conviction about their sin, who are brought face to face with God and the fact that they have come short of His glory.

V 27, *Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.*

This is the key to interpreting the parable.

- The man was loosed.
- He had no responsibility to pay that debt.
- He would never have to pay that debt.
- The man would never go to hell to work off whatever could be worked off in eternity.
- The man was loosed from the obligation.
- He was forgiven.
- He was freed from having to do anything, and the king did everything.

This describes the saving grace of God.

The man is loosed from any obligation, and he is utterly forgiven. Whatever other things in the parable may be unclear, that appears to me to be very clear.

The king himself absorbs the loss, and that is exactly as it was on the cross of Christ.

Because it was on the cross of Christ that Jesus in His own flesh absorbed the loss. He Himself paid the price for your sin and mine.

- ✓ God absorbs the loss.
- ✓ God suffers the consequence.
- ✓ God pays the price Himself that could never be paid.

This man with repentance and genuine contrition, and even though he doesn't understand the enormity of his sin. He doesn't understand how it's all completely by grace, God sees in his brokenness legitimate repentance, and gives him what he so desperately needs.

God frees him from any responsibility to pay the debt on his own and forgives him of his sin.

V 28, *“But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’*

Absolutely absurd.

How soon did he forget what he had been forgiven?

How soon did he forget his Lord’s compassion?

The same servant who had just been forgiven.

The same one, the forgiven one.

He was looking for somebody.

This was not an incident that he didn’t expect.

He didn’t inadvertently run into the person. He was out there searching for this fellow.

“One of his fellow servants.”

We are introduced to a word that I think has meaning in the parable, ***sundoulon***, *“fellow servant.”*

This identifies this one as another who has been forgiven, another in the family.

The Lord then takes the parable into the family of those who are fellows in Christ, who are in the fellowship.

It describes in the parable a Christian brother.

It is used consistently that way in the rest of the parable in the four times that it appears.

So, he finds another fellow servant, not just another servant somewhere in the world, but one who serves the same king, one who is a fellow servant.

We can be seen as a term to identify believers in this parable.

This other servant was not necessarily the same rank.

He perhaps worked under this first servant. It may have been that he was a provincial governor, and this person was one of his local tax collectors, but they both served the same king.

He goes, finds the fellow servant, lays his hands on him, takes him by the throat, literally the Greek says *“he went about choking him and saying pay me what you owe me.”*

if the man is not a true Christian, then the whole parable in its context breaks down because the impact of the entire parable is that here was a man who was fully forgiven and wouldn’t forgive.

If you remove the initial forgiveness, and it wasn’t legitimate, and he wasn’t really forgiven, then the whole parable makes no sense.

- We don't expect him to forgive if he wasn't forgiven.
- We don't expect him to act like God acts if he doesn't have God in his heart.
- We don't expect him to do what God did if he doesn't know God did that or if God didn't do that.

It is a parable about forgiveness, and the validity of forgiveness, and one believer forgiving another.

What makes the parable so powerful and dramatic?

The person was forgiven.

He was saved.

He gets his hands on this servant and starts to choke him.

Roman secular writers, often speak about men going to their debtors and wrenching their neck until blood ran out of their nose and mouth. That's the old collection agency approach.

As a Christian going to another one in the family and demanding payment. This one has been offended.

Maybe the debt is real.

Maybe this really was a sin against this person.

Maybe he really was defrauded in some manner.

He won't forgive.

Do you think Christians don't have problems forgiving each other?

They do.

I am one. I have experienced that.

Christians struggle with this.

The flesh works its way into our redeemed lives.

Do you have anybody that owes you money?

Do you think of them?

Can you think of them?

How many times have you choked on them in your mind?

We have problems with that, even sometimes in the church of Jesus Christ.

Somebody says something you don't like, and for the rest of the time in the church you avoid that person. Every time you see that person, anger comes up in your heart.

You hold bitterness.

You hold a grudge.

It throws back all the garbage of what happened years and years ago, because you just can't let go of that.

You, as a Christian, are not immune from that problem.

So, the people who get nervous because this guy is so unforgiving and say, "How could a Christian be like this?"

There are people in this church right now who are unforgiving toward each other and causing all kinds of anxiety, pain, and friction here, and they are Christians.

But they can't forgive.

Because they won't forgive.

The flesh rises to seek its vengeance.

Like **1 Corinthians 6**, where the Christians were suing each other.

Christians can get into warfare with each other. They can really hold grudges, retain bitter nesses.

Pay me what you owe me.

We shouldn't be startled that this is a Christian. Somewhat common.

V 29, *So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'*

The same speech in **verse 26**.

The person got the same speech back that he gave the lord, just as if that might jog his mind a little.

Didn't those words sound familiar?

Isn't that the same thing you were pleading when you were pleading your case for an insurmountable, unpayable sum?

You were begging the king to let you off the hook.

Now a fellow person owes you 18 pounds, and are you strangling him?

Even the familiar words echoing in his ears can't find a response from his heart.

This person is begging.

He besought him. This isn't worship. He doesn't say he fell down and worshiped him.

This is no sovereign.

This is between a servant to a servant.

He could have paid.

There was a possibility in that.

But the application is obvious.

- Our sin against God is unpayable.
- Other debts we incur with people are easily payable.

But the point is when we have received forgiveness so vast, so far-reaching, so comprehensive, how can we be so small as not to forgive another?

We ought to get used to forgiving.

We may want it from the very person we won't give it to. It's unimaginable, but Christians do this. It's the reason churches split. It is the reason there is friction.

People in a church, maybe somebody does something they don't like and instead of being able to give it to the Lord and forgive and embrace that person in love, they just get bitter. That bitterness becomes divisive and projected on out. That's what splits churches. That's what devastates God's family.

It's unimaginable, but it's more common than we like to admit.

It may well be that the disciples were in the midst of doing it themselves. They were fighting to see who would be the greatest in the kingdom. To sort of keep their supremacy, they may have cultivated in their heart's certain attitudes towards others. In their mind demeaned the others, put them down lower than they were so they could feel good about themselves by exaltation. They may well have been holding grudges.

V 30, *And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.*

Unimaginable.

No compassion.

This is an impossible reaction.

- Himself pitied.
- He should have pitied.

- Himself forgiven.
- He should have forgiven.

- Himself loved.
- He should have loved.

- ✚ Himself having received mercy.
- ✚ He should have dispensed it.

The greatest sins that a man commits against a man are nothing. They are change compared to the sins committed against God.

God forgives them all.

Who is man not to forgive lesser?

The whole point of the verse is that he wouldn't forgive.

What gives the parable its power is that he was forgiven.

That's the strength of the argument.

How can those truly forgiven not forgive?

When God has forgiven an infinitely greater debt, how easily we forget.

Titus 3:2-6, *to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.* ³ *For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.* ⁴ *But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,* ⁵ *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,* ⁶ *whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour,*

Don't treat people like you used to. Look at what Christ has done for you.

The same idea.

Sadly, the church has been riddled all its lifelong by the tragic sin of unforgiveness, and the consequent bitterness and hostility and discord.

This is to go against your new nature, because if you are in the kingdom then you must be a merciful person.

Matthew 5:7, *"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."*

We are marked as merciful people.

Our newness.

Only the flesh that rises up and makes us merciless.

So, consider the source.

If you are not forgiving, that isn't the new you.

Your flesh, vaulting itself into prominence.

When you do that, you will cut yourself off from that relational forgiveness with God that makes the communion sweet.

- If you looked at your life and you see a lack of power,
- If you lack depth in your spiritual life,
- If you see a lack of hunger for God's Word,
- If you lack love for the private place of prayer,
- if you have not seen what you would like to see in your life of the richness of your relationship with God,

because there is a blockage there, and the Lord isn't giving you that forgiveness that brings sweet relationship with Him.

Because you have got it blocked somewhere else with somebody else.

Until you forgive that other one, the Lord isn't going to open up the flow of communion with Him.

V 31, *So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.*

Here is a group of Christians, believers, who saw what was done. They saw the whole thing.

If this parable were a true story, these fellow servants would have no doubt followed the sequence of **Matthew 18:15-20**.

- They would have seen this unforgiving servant.
- They would have gone to him.
- Then they would have taken two or three with them.
- Then they would have told it to the whole assembly.
- Then they would have put him out if he didn't respond.

If we put the whole chapter in context and this were a real story, then these fellow servants would have done all they could to get the person to do what was right and forgive the debt.

But apparently, they have exhausted that capacity, and this servant who is determined to get his due out of this guy is resistant to all their efforts.

- They are witnesses to it.
- They have been involved in the process.
- They did the only thing they had left.

"They were very sorry."

Two things in here that stand out.

- One, there was one servant who was unforgiving,
- Two there were servants who were sorry about that.

These people are acting in accord with the new creation.

This is the majority kind of attitude of those who have been forgiven. They are forgivers.

The commonness of God's forgiven people is that they are concerned to be forgivers.

Here we have the rest of the believing people who are sorry about this because they know what they have been forgiven.

- They know the standard God has established.
- They know how God longs for forgiveness.
- They understand the holiness of His law.
- They understand the unity of His family.
- They understand the richness of fellowship.
- They are sorry.

A strong word for "sorry."

Sphodra means "excessively grieved, violently grieved."

They are very distressed.

When Christians become concerned about another Christian's sin it is wonderful. They are violently, excessively grieved about this, because there is a lack of response to the law of God, the will of God, and the way of God that's disrupting the fellowship.

What did they do?

This group in their sorrow *"came and told unto their lord all that was done."*

What do you do when you have taken all the steps of discipline, and the person hasn't responded?

Where do you go?

You go to the Lord!

These people coming before God with a broken heart.

If believers were concerned about each other's sinfulness, then what a healing would be in the fellowship.

They go to the presence of the king. It assumes that they have already been to the servant and been unsuccessful in getting him to respond.

"Came and told their Lord."

They gave him a careful, detailed outline of everything.

They must have gone through the whole process.

No doubt they recited the whole process to the king and said that we have tried everything we can to settle this thing, and we just come to you as a last resort. We are so sad about this unforgiving servant.

God's people going to the Lord in prayer about a sinning brother or sister. We have the same responsibility to take that to the Lord that they did.

Their response was grief.

What was the response of the king?

V 32, *Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.'*

What is God's attitude?

You wicked servant.

Can this be a Christian?

God would never say that to a Christian. Is it?

What is wickedness?

Sin.

Do Christians sin?

One sin is constituted wickedness.

The Lord is simply affirming what is true about the person.

You are a sinful person.

All unrighteousness is sin.

"You wicked servant I forgave you all that debt."

The interpretive key to the whole thing.

He reaffirms the reality of that full forgiveness.

"Because you begged me."

V 26, *The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'*

Here is a broken person aware of his sin, brought to conviction, pleading for God to be merciful. It was out of that pleading that he was saved, forgiven, and loosed from the debt.

It was a real forgiveness.

V 33, *Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?*

If the first forgiveness wasn't legitimate, the second point is meaningless.

He must be legitimate in the first forgiveness, and on which the second forgiveness is built.

“Pity.”

You should have had compassion and pity just like I did.

How did he have compassion?

He had compassion, loosed him from the debt, and forgave him.

Somebody owes you something. They have done something to hurt you. They have done something to irritate you. They have offended you, said something about you that wasn't true.

They have maybe done something to defraud you economically.

You are going to let the thing burn in you or you are going to get your due.

No. Just have compassion.

Galatians 6:1, *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

Just consider their weakness, and when they plead, be compassionate.

That's what you should have done because that's what was done for you when you pled for forgiveness.

V 34, *And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.*

Is the Lord angry with a Christian?

Sure.

The Lord gets angry every time you sin.

What makes God angry?

Sin makes God angry.

God always gets angry about sin. The Lord has holy indignation against evil, even in your life and mine.

delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

Can this be a Christian?

Hebrews 12:5-6, *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”*

Every Christian feels the tormentors.

Every Christian feels the scourging.

Every Christian at some point in time is going to feel the inquisitors putting the pressure until we confess and repent.

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons.

Hebrews 12:7-8, *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.*

The Christian will be turned over to the inquisitor.

What is the point here?

The inquisitor puts you under the gun, under the stress, under the difficulty, under the pressure, under the chastening until you confess your sin.

That is exactly what the Lord's chastening is to do.

If you are not forgiving someone, the Lord will put you under chastening. He will apply the pressure to you until your response is right.

until he should pay all that was due to him.

He could never pay the whole debt.

Even an unbeliever couldn't pay the whole debt.

The physical parable cannot convey the full understanding of the spiritual truth.

The intent of the parable is simply to say that you put him under chastening pressure until he pays what should be paid since what he has done. The Lord delivers us to chastening.

There is discipline and chastening to every son that God loves, and that's when he puts us in the hands of the inquisitors, or the jailers, or the tormentors, parabolically speaking, who apply the pressure to us until we admit our sin and confess our sin.

It is the sin of unforgiveness.

As long as you are not forgiving the way you were forgiven by God, magnanimously, compassionately, and totally, you are not going to experience relief from these inquisitors.

The sinner will satisfy God.

He will pay what can be paid.

He will satisfy the debt when he is broken, repentant, contrite in heart, and steps into the sphere of obedience.

Fellowship is restored.

Chastening in a sense, then, makes us pay.

Chastening makes us pay with a view, not just to punishment as such, but to refinement as a goal.

You don't punish your child just with that in mind.

When your child does something bad, you don't just whack them around so that you can deliver the punishment. You do that with a view to changing their behaviour. To modify their behaviour so they will do it right next time.

God is doing the very same thing.

So as Christians this is a strong word to us.

V 35, *“So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”*

He is not saying this to unbelievers because there's one thing unbelievers can't do, and that's they can't act like God toward each other and forgive.

These are Christians.

When a person was forgiven and wouldn't forgive, he was punished. You have been forgiven and you had better forgive or you are going to be chastened.

Two things stand out in this parable.

➤ **Positive:**

We ought to forgive because we have been forgiven so much.

➤ **Negative:**

We ought to forgive, because if we don't, we are going to be chastened.

A traveler in Burma, after fording a certain river, found his body covered all over by a swarm of small leeches busily sucking his blood. His first impulse was to tear the tormentors from his flesh, but his servant warned him that to pull them off by mechanical violence would expose his life to danger. They must not be torn off, lest portions remain in the wounds and become poison. They must drop off spontaneously and so they will be harmless.

The native prepared a bath for his master by the concoction of some herbs and directed him to lie down in it. As soon as he had bathed in the balsam bath, the leeches dropped off.

Each unforgiven injury rankling in the heart is like a leech sucking life's blood. Mere human determination to have done with it will not cast the evil thing away. You must bathe your whole

being in God's pardoning mercy and these venomous creatures will instantly let go their hold and you will stand up free. William Arnot.

You must see how much you have been forgiven.

We can stand around praying for the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, but we will experience it when we learn to forgive.

Three stages in forgiveness.

Stage one, suffering.

Suffering creates the condition that brings the need for forgiveness. Somebody does something to hurt you, you suffer, you are offended, you are hurt.

Second, surgery.

Here is the inner response where their forgiver performs spiritual surgery in his memory, just like God did, who remembers our sins no more. You suffered, and now you are going to have surgery. You are going to cut out of your mind all those things. You do that by the power of God and the meditation on His forgiveness.

Thirdly, starting over.

Forgiveness is complete when alienated people are fully reconciled.

Now, when you forgive it doesn't mean that you forget.

Our minds hang on a long time.

It doesn't mean that you excuse the sin or the wrong.

It does mean that you end the cycle of pain, and you restore the relationship.

That's what our Lord is after.

- We are children in the family, beloved.
- We came in like children, we must be cared for like children, protected like children, disciplined like children, and we need to forgive each other, because we are just human.
- If we are a society of forgiving people, we will be so unlike the world.

Conclusion:

Two incidents.

Two different responses.

Who do you want to associate with?

Rev Julie Nicholson. 7th July 2005.

A vicar whose daughter died in the London tube bombings has stepped down because she can no longer bring herself to fulfil her duty to preach forgiveness.

The **Rev Julie Nicholson, 52**, has felt unable to celebrate communion for her parishioners since her daughter, **Jenny**, was killed at **Edgware Road on July 7, 2005**. Unwilling to be a hypocrite, she has resigned from the parish of **St Aidan with St George in Bristol**.

"It's very difficult for me to stand behind an altar and celebrate the Eucharist, the Communion, and lead people in words of peace and reconciliation and forgiveness when I feel very far from that myself."

"I am looking for a way in which I can still have priestly ministry when there are some things I can no longer practice, or I can't currently practice, and for me that's about integrity."

The Bishop of Bristol, Mike Hill, a friend of hers, said he understood how her faith had been shaken. "I think these situations in life shake the faith of everybody, because they immediately bring into focus the 'why' question," he said. "Unfortunately, there's no simple Elastoplast answer to that question."

Jenny Nicholson, who was 24, was killed by the suicide bomber **Mohammed Sidique Khan** on the eastbound Circle line service she had boarded at Paddington station. She had phoned her boyfriend, James White, minutes earlier.

Mrs. Nicholson was too distraught to speak at her daughter's funeral at Bristol Cathedral in August.

Mrs. Nicholson, who has two other children, **Tom, 16, and Lizzie, 22**, was given extended compassionate leave but has been unable to return to the parish and has taken a job with a church-backed community youth project.

Julie justifies her stance by asserting forgiveness depends upon the guilty party requesting it.

The person who killed her daughter is dead and so there's no relationship to be restored. She thinks Jenny would want her to lead a good life and not worry about forgiveness.

Mrs. Bristol and Michael Keys

The tiny housewife from **Dearborn, Michigan**, confessed to a little nervousness as she spoke to a group of inmates in the prison chapel at the California Men's Colony here. She and her husband, **Bob**, had driven 2,000 miles to see their "special person," prisoner **Michael Keeyes**, who was convicted of murdering their daughter, **Diane**.

The body of **Diane**, then 20, was found in **1970 in San Diego's North Park area**. She had been selling encyclopedias door-to-door when she was kidnaped and strangled.

The Bristol's said God led them on their mission, a journey of forgiveness that prompted their "friends and loved ones to shake their heads because they could not understand."

"We harbored no hatred, no revenge. We knew God could make something good out of this pain." Mrs. Bristol told in 1970, when she and her husband received "the devastating news that our daughter Diane had been raped and brutally murdered, it cut like a knife into the depths of our souls. We had the normal human reaction of grief and anguish.

"Didn't I have the right to be filled with a red-hot hate? But where would it have gotten me? It wouldn't have brought my daughter back."

After Keeyes' imprisonment, the Bristol's, a religious couple, began some correspondence with him through the Rev. Joe Mason, director of the Prison Mission Assn. in Riverside.

Keeyes turned to the Bristol's and said, "God bless you, folks," then threw his arms around them both.

"You don't have to commit a horrible crime to be lost," Bristol told the inmates. "You just have to ignore Jesus Christ."

"What would make us the happiest is when Keeyes accepts Jesus Christ." **Mrs. Bristol.**

The San Diego judge who sentenced Keeyes to life imprisonment in **1973** said Keeyes was "cunning, calculating and callous — the most vicious killer I have encountered in my career."

"We view this person as one of value and worth," said Mrs. Bristol. "We are interested in him as a total person. Not for what he did, but for what he can become."

Application:

You may search your own heart for a moment in the close of our service.

Ask God if there's unforgiveness in your heart.

If you want, ask forgiveness to anyone just go to the person and ask and reconcile now.