

Three Windows Three Women

Betrayal and forgiveness



*Jessica Schrock-Ringenberg, 27
Bryan, Ohio*

I am no stranger to betrayal and the journey of forgiveness; growing up with a present, yet absent, father was a constant reminder that his children were not his greatest priority. However, when I think of betrayal he is not necessarily the first thing that comes to mind.

Ultimately the greatest betrayal in my family has been the one among sisters, mothers, and grandmothers. I come from a family of strong women. We were raised with no doubt in our minds that women could do anything men could do.

However, while we were taught we were just as capable as men, we were also taught that anything remotely feminine was weak. Tomboys you would call us, generations and generations of tomboys. Not necessarily because we all preferred trucks over dolls, but because being nurturing, compassionate and sympathetic led to vulnerability which we could not afford. Perhaps it is part and parcel of lower class, white society—women must be as tough as men, act like men, and lead like men—lest we are left to be devoured by those stronger; a “dog eat dog world.”

It wasn't until I was almost finished college that I learned what it meant to be a strong woman—power comes with true vulnerability. I also learned that women, who believe strength comes in leading like men, are denying the true capacity for growth in our families, churches, and society. The greatest betrayal is when women do not allow other women to reach their full potential. We need to recognize this journey that we are on isn't a competition; there is enough life to go around. When we can be secure in this, we can all be in it together. 🗉

*Hatoko Inoue, 34
Elkhart, Indiana*

I began to really understand what it means to forgive when I experienced a betrayal by a friend several years ago. I have been praying the Lord's Prayer ever since I was a little girl, but it became very hard for the first time in my life to pray, "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."

When I suddenly received an e-mail from a trusted friend to not contact him anymore, I experienced a great shock which affected me physically and emotionally. I asked myself, what is forgiveness? Do I have to forgive even though everything seems one-sided? How can I overcome the bitterness and pain that I am experiencing?

My family and friends stood by me and surrounded me with love. My mother kept hearing the stories from both sides even though she was feeling my pain greatly. She continued to tell him we loved him and he was welcome in our home anytime. A year and half later, I received a heartfelt apology from the friend, and my heart finally began to feel peaceful from deep within.

Forgiveness may not happen in one day or one time, but we can choose to forgive as we receive comfort and strength from God, who is our mediator, and live in God's peace. 📖



Editor's note: This column is a forum for women to share perspectives on the current issue's theme. It introduces women spanning their 20's-30's, 40's-50's, and 60's and above. If you are interested in writing for this column, please contact editor, Patricia Burdette, at <PattyB@MennoniteWomenUSA.org>.



*Diana Ivy, 49
Calico Rock, Arkansas*

When my 17-year-old daughter became a murder victim, I felt I would never recover from my loss. I couldn't understand why God let something like this happen to my family. I felt I would carry the grief and bitterness with me the rest of my days. And I almost did. Well-meaning folks told me I would see some good come from this one day and that I needed to forgive; after all, that's what God would want me to do. But could I do it?

My husband became a pastor and naturally he preached on forgiveness at times. I had noticed how the bitterness was affecting my mother. Was it doing the same to me? I started asking God to show me how to forgive. I began by being willing to let God work in my heart. It wasn't easy, but it was necessary. I started to learn the difference between forgiving and condoning. I also came to learn forgiveness is a conscious choice and a process. It doesn't happen overnight, and it doesn't happen without prayer, and yes, some pain.

I will always miss my child and want her with me. But she was a Christian, and I have the comfort of knowing she is with Jesus, and that helps. I also have chosen to let God turn my "mourning into dancing" just like David wrote in Psalm 30:11.

I have been on this forgiveness journey now for 20 years, and some days I take two steps forward, and some days I take one step back. But I am moving forward and with God leading the way, I know I will continue to heal and forgive. And it is my prayer, dear reader, that you also will experience the healing that forgiveness brings. 📌