

Week 44—Forgiveness

Read

Mary Houry

17 years old

Damour, Lebanon

During the Lebanese civil war, 1975-1992

Mary Houry and her family were forced to their knees before their home. The leader of the Muslim fanatics who had raided their village waved his pistol carelessly before their faces. His hatred for Christians burned in his eyes. “If you do not become a Muslim,” he threatened, “you will be shot.”

Mary knew Jesus didn’t have to die either, but He chose the cross. So Mary said, “I was baptized as a Christian and His word came to me: ‘Don’t deny your faith.’ I will obey Him. Go ahead and shoot.” The report of a gun from behind her echoed in the valley and Mary’s body fell limply to the ground.

Two days later, the Red Cross came into her village. Of all her family, Mary was the only one still alive. But the bullet had cut her spinal cord, leaving both her arms paralyzed. They were stretched out from her body and bent at the elbows, reminiscent of Jesus at His crucifixion. She could do nothing with them.

More words from the Lord came to Mary. Even though she was now handicapped, she knew God had a plan for her life.

“Everyone has a vocation,” she said. “I can never marry or do any physical work. So I will offer my life for Muslims, like the one who cut my father’s throat, cursed my mother and stabbed her, and then tried to kill me. My life will be a prayer for them.”¹

Reflect

And while being reviled, He [Jesus] did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. (1 Peter 2:23)

Respond

Mary could have become bitter, but instead she let the grace of God transform what should have been hate to godly love. This can happen only when a person releases their offenders to God, for Him to deal with them according to His justice, His compassion, and His love. Vengeance is His; not yours and no man can sit on His throne to cast judgment. Has someone hurt you recently? Do you fume every time you think about them or hear their name? How do you feel and what do you think God wants you to do with this situation?

Write your thoughts here:

Prayer Requests for yourself, your students, and others with whom you serve in ministry:

Remember

Forgiveness is not saying, “Oh, that’s okay.” Forgiveness says, “What you did was wrong. I know it. You know it, and God knows it. But it is not my place to sit on God’s throne and cast judgment on you. Therefore, I commit you into His hands, for Him to deal justly with you.”

“Nothing on earth consumes a person more quickly than the passion of resentment.”

Friedrich Nietzsche²

¹ *Jesus Freak Youth Devotional*, (publisher and date is unknown), p 80.

² Source of quote is unknown.

