



Peace Advocate News

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Matthew 5:9

Peace begins when you make your peace with Jesus, accept Him as Savior and follow Him as Lord.

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A Reason to Celebrate & Continue to Pray

The Nigerian government announced that 21 of the Chibok schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram in April 2014 have been freed in negotiations with the insurgents, according to reports from media outlets on October 13 including the Associated Press (AP) and ABC News and PBS. The negotiations were carried out with help from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Swiss government.

Some 197 Chibok students remain in Boko Haram hands, and "it is not known how many of them may have died," said the AP report, as published on AllAfrica.com. According to AP, the freed girls are in the custody of Nigeria's Department of State Services, which is the country's intelligence agency. Presidential spokesman Garba Shehu told the AP that talks will continue for the release of the rest of the Chibok girls.

The Nigerian Government held a celebration of the 21 girl's release which their parents and Brethren leaders were able to attend. This picture was taken by Joel S. Billi, President of EYN (the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria).

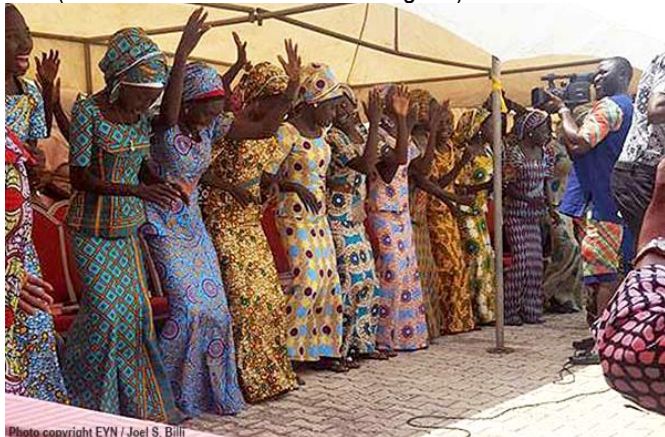


Photo copyright EYN / Joel S. Billi

Continued prayers are needed for these 21 girls that they will soon be allowed to return to their families; that they will be able to recover physically, mentally and emotionally from their two and a half year ordeal; that they will be welcomed back into the community and allowed to resume their lives. Continued prayers are also needed for the 197 Chibok girls and the many others who are still held by Boko Haram; that they too will be freed; that Boko Haram will turn away from violence and seek peaceful ways to address the issues they have with society; that Nigeria can put aside corruption and violence and find a way for all Nigerians to live in peace. Also pray for the Nigerian Brethren. They continue to be a Peace Church, and continue to struggle with how to love even Boko Haram.

Salamatu Billi, wife of Joel S. Billi, president of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), is

a leader in EYN's women's fellowship and choir. She offered this prayer on Facebook to celebrate the 21 girls' release:

"Oh God of creation. Holy Father!! You are so awesome!! There is none like you. Your ways are far above human understanding. A thousand years before you is like a day. We praise you Lord for your loving kindness. For the release of the 21 Chibok girls. We still ask Lord that your mighty hand will make possible the release of the remaining girls. Blessed be your Holy name. Amen."

For more information: The names of the girls who have been released is on the Brethren website at brethren.org. Salamatu Billi's prayer (Newsline October 19) and other news is on Brethren Newsline. The AP & ABC News report is at:

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/nigeria-21-abducted-chibok-schoolgirls-freed-42771802>.

Find information on the Nigeria Crisis Response of the Church of the Brethren and EYN at www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisis.

Forgive and Forget?

Linda L. Fry and Clyde C. Fry, 11-30-2016

The Sunday school answer is that forgiveness wipes away sin and leaves one clean and new. The old saying is, "forgive and forget," but what does this concept really mean in practice? When a wrong is committed something happens that causes harm, alarm, and hurt. In some cases it can be a 'small' thing that is easily 'fixed.' Damaged property can be repaired or replaced and life will continue after some inconvenience. This may be financially costly, but not necessarily life changing for the parties involved. Careless, spiteful or deceitful words however can strike to the core of one's heart, mind and soul. When they do, forgiving is not a single event, but a process.

Words are meant for communication, sharing information, and creating inspiration; but they can also be used as weapons to hurt; promote deceit; and to grasp power and control over others. The negative use of words is not easy to forget because they drive so deeply into the human psyche. Once spoken, what is said, true or false, cannot be taken back or erased.

As the recent political season has illustrated the power of negative words can bring out the worst in people. Negative words feed upon people's ignorance, inner anger, fears, and self-interest; causing a decline in concern for the common good. Working for the common good is essential for a prosperous, peaceful society. What we say exposes who we truly are whether said in the spur of the moment, in anger, or in reasoned discourse. Therefore, caustic speech-making is not a game that ethical/moral people can play in private or in public discourse to make points, close a deal, or as a politician "in order to get elected." One cannot excuse what is said under the guise of achieving some lofty future goal or because of the pressure of the moment. What we say is not conceived out of

thin air, it simply brings to the surface the deep struggles and dark thoughts of ones innermost self. Our words reflect the struggle between self-centeredness and narrow tribalism on one hand and the need to serve the common good...where all people are "created equal" and governance is about "we the people" not "we the special color or the special interests" on the other. The desire to win at all costs sacrifices one's moral and ethical compass and leads to eventual downfall. Talk is not cheap, but we can and do create a lot of cheap talk! In Ephesians Paul reminds us: "Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear." (Ephesians 4:29)¹

Whether dealing with words or actions, forgiving does not require that the person who caused the hurt ask for forgiveness. Often the fact that a person causing great harm does not acknowledge doing so is part of the damage done. It is worse if they attempt to shift responsibility for causing the hurt to others or even to the one they have hurt. Forgiving can be easier if the one causing the hurt asks for forgiveness, but the primary effect of forgiveness is in what happens to the spirit of the one who forgives. Forgiveness takes away the burden of hurt, anger and hate that can stifle and smother one's spirituality. Forgiving restores ones spiritual connection to God and re-ives ones faith in humanity.

For the perpetrator the victim's forgiveness exhibits Christ-like behavior. This example can open the doorway for the perpetrator to engage in the life restoring acts of repentance and restitution. "God showed us how much he loves us: it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!" (Romans 5:8) Our forgiveness both illustrates and invokes God's love. That's a powerful witness and it can stimulate the "sinner" to make a positive response. However, repentance and making restitution are steps that no one but the perpetrator can take.

Another critical part of forgiving is that many times moving forward for the good of everyone demands both forgiving and remembering what happened so the lesson – that causing such damage and suffering is wrong – can be taught and learned. Remembering involves confronting the offender. Doing this is the only way to prevent the wrong from being repeated. The failure to confront an offender can mean that the offender will simply go on offending. That's why forgiveness and confrontation are two sides of the same coin.

Rick Polhamus, of Christian Peacemaker Teams knows this. He works with Palestinians to provide a protective calm and loving presence in conflicts between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian citizens. On one occasion an Israeli soldier physically attacked him. The unprovoked attack was caught on film. Rick forgave his attacker, but also pursued assault charges against the soldier in the Israeli courts. Rick knew, as an American with film footage of the unprovoked attack, he could use the court case as a witness to the Israeli military and to both Israelis and Palestinians that the violence, which takes place almost every day, against Palestinians is wrong and should be stopped. A Palestinian in his place would not have

been able to do the same. The court decided in Rick's favor and disciplined the soldier. At first the soldier threatened to kill Rick, but later thanked Rick for his action because it helped him to regain a measure of his own humanity and to see that violence was not accomplishing anything positive.

When a wrong, be it words or actions, has caused hurt, harm, physical injury, or death, there may be no way to restore the loss. However, forgiveness and forgetting the anger or desire for revenge creates the conditions which can allow reconciliation and healing to take place. Then people can work to rebuild trust and move forward together and start a new chapter.

Forgiveness is one ingredient in building and maintaining healthy relationships. Like regular meals, forgiveness is a daily part of living. For example, the Nickel Mines, PA Amish School shooting in which five young girls were shot dead and five seriously wounded, provides a unique case study about forgiveness. The evening of the shooting a number of Amish parents, whose daughters were either dead or wounded, visited the shooter's family (*He killed himself as the police broke into the school*) to say that they held no grudge and forgave the shooter for his heinous act. The shooter's family was amazed and comforted. The shooter's funeral was attended by more Amish than non-Amish, and the Amish generously extended their sympathy. For the Amish survivors, living with the empty spaces in their homes and observing the struggle of the recovering wounded, at least one of which is now hopelessly disabled for life, requires a continuing commitment to God and the way of forgiving even "seventy-times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22)². Part of the reality of forgiving is that the hurt may never go away. Despite our best efforts to 'forget', the memory of the hurt may be aroused in our minds at any time because the setting and the people involved in the "hurt" remain in place. That is why forgiving is a daily task. That is why forgiving, letting go of the hate and anger, is so important.

To remember the details of a wrong is often essential to human progress. In the aftermath of World War II, when the American and British allies liberated the German concentration camps in which 6 million Jews and at least as many other people died, the allied supreme commander Dwight David Eisenhower did two important things in addition to providing all the help he could to the survivors. He brought the people from the surrounding towns and villages into the camps to see for themselves what had taken place there. He required them to help bury the dead. He also made sure that everything in the camps was recorded on film so the German people and the world had irrefutable evidence of what had happened there. Why did he do these things? First, Eisenhower wanted to show how human ideology, gone astray, could dehumanize an entire society; how "closing your eyes" to governmental and military oppression empowers and legitimizes that oppression and makes co-conspirators of a self-absorbed, uninformed, uncaring public. Second, Eisenhower's goal for the allied occupation of Germany was to establish a democratic government under which the common good was insured by the rule of just laws. Indictment and punishment was left to the courts.

Civil restoration was left to the government and social, economic, and religious institutions within the society. Most allies worked with Germany in a forgiving spirit. A progressive democratic Germany became the result of his approach.

America is still paying for the harsh and punitive way in which the North treated the South after the American Civil War. The assassination of Abraham Lincoln by vengeful Southern patriots canceled the reconciliatory intent (revealed in the Gettysburg Address) of Lincoln's plans for reintegrating the South into the Union. After the assassination a vengeful North put in place policies that punished the Confederate States rather than attempting to reconcile with them. Helpless to find any satisfying retaliatory response the former slave states took out their ire on African Americans who became their scapegoats and slavery was replaced by segregation, 'Jim Crow', and the poll tax. The failure of the people north and south to seek forgiveness and reconciliation has maintained the divide between the old confederate states and the rest of the country to this day.

The wisdom in the Sunday school call to forget is in the willingness to release our grudges and desire for vengeance so that we are free to confront a wrongdoer in the hope of preventing future wrong. To confront a wrongdoer means that you do not measure future possibilities by past wrongs. Instead you seek a new beginning with responsible action and thoughtful concern for the good of everyone.

"Forgive and Forget" is an unwise and simplistic response to the complicated realities of wrongdoing. Wrongdoing places responsibility on both the victim and the perpetrator. Verse four of the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:4a) says: "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." In order to have the ability to forgive we must first clean up our own minds and attitudes (log and speck, Matthew 7:1-5). When that is done, by God's grace, we will find the intellectual and emotional ability to forgive and to confront the perpetrator with the implications of that forgiveness. "Forgive and Confront" should replace "Forgive and Forget." Forgiveness unburdens us so that we are free to live a full life once again and it raises the possibility that the perpetrator can undergo a similar transformation.

Philosopher, essayist, poet, and novelist George Santayana wrote: "*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*" "Forgive and Forget" misses that crucial point. We do not record history out of nostalgia, but because the past helps to teach us how to live in the present! Such teaching is not restricted just to the bad that took place, but also to the good things that took place; that's why we sing "*Precious memories, how they linger...*" We might also want to sing: "*Sober memories, how they enlighten us...*" The past contains both and we must learn from both. Learn to Forgive and Confront!

¹ See also James 3:1-12 and II Timothy 12:14

² The shooter's mother now spends one day a week caring for the most seriously disabled survivor of the shooting. She says the love and forgiveness offered to her by the Amish has transformed her life and given her a new purpose.



Practical Peacemaking Tips

A study by the Southern Poverty Law Center found that this year's political campaign has had a very negative effect on children. Children of color are afraid and anxious about their safety. Incidences of bullying, harassment, and intimidation of students whose race, religion, or nationalities have been verbal targets of candidates are up. Many teachers say, "The gains made by years of anti-bullying work in schools have been rolled back in a few short months." Source: Michael Winshp. "This Election's Teaching Our Kids Bad Habits". *Common Dreams*. 4-21-2016. (licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 License)

What can you do to help children in this mean-spirited climate?

- The teachings of Jesus are still true and need to be lived out now more than ever.
- **Remind yourself and teach your children that**
 - Disagreeing with someone is OK. Condemning them; dehumanizing them; blaming them for all the world's or your own problems; being mean to them; threatening them, or harming them is not.
 - Stereotyping people by race, religion, nationality, or any other characteristic goes against what Jesus taught.
 - We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves – and neighbors are not just the people in the house next door (Mark 12:28-31)
 - We are called to address our own faults and shortcomings instead condemning other people for theirs. We are not to judge others. (Matthew 7:1-5)
 - We are called to love our enemies and pray for them – pray for their wellbeing and for God's grace for them not for their destruction. (Matthew 5:43-48)
- Watch your own behavior, attitudes, and conversations. Little ears and eyes are always listening and watching. Children learn more from how the adults around them act than they do from what adults tell them to do or not do.
- Limit your children's exposure (and your own!) to media 'news' programming. Since the move to 24 hour 'news' broadcasting, 90% of what is shown is commentary not news. Learn to tell the difference and help children (when they are old enough) to do the same. Remember, most 'experts' called in to comment are paid to do so and usually do not have any direct knowledge of the situation they are commenting on. Note where they are from. Be aware of their bias. Especially when broadcasters are in 'crisis' mode, speculation and hearsay are presented as 'fact' which means the 'facts' appear to change as new information comes in. It is sometimes days before actual accurate facts are known or shared. By then, people may have already formed opinions based on the hearsay or innuendo not truth and facts. This only makes a tense situation worse. Some broadcasters and commentators use inflammatory or sensationalizing language. Some commentators and many panels of 'experts' are not courteous to each other. Much of what is presented is done with entertainment

value in mind not as fair-minded reporting or reasoned dialogue. The same things are true of internet news. Information gained from social media is not fact checked, may be hearsay, or can be easily fabricated. **Know your sources. Check for facts. Do not jump to conclusions – especially based on only one source.**

- Listen to your children. Ask them how they are feeling. Ask them about what is happening at school. Get involved. Work together with teachers and other parents – especially if your school population is diverse – to help children and families get to know each other so that children will learn to see each other as classmates, neighbors, and friends.
- Children need to know that adults – especially those in positions of power – do not always act as Jesus would want them to. Help children learn that being mean, disrespectful, rude, and lying is not OK no matter who is doing it. Help them learn to treat people with respect and caring even if those people do not do the same.
- Help children learn how to respectfully disagree with someone.
 - Teach them to listen to the views of others and work to understand those views even if they do not agree with them.
 - Teach children how they can share their ideas and opinions in ways that help rather than hurt.
 - Teach children that disagreeing with someone over something does not mean you cannot be friends with them.

The attitudes and ways of looking at other people children learn when they are young will follow them through out life. Their attitudes will either help make the world a better place in the future or help continue the mean-spirited climate that is causing so much trouble now. Be good examples and good teachers. Your children and the future depend on it!

The Inspector General Finds That the Army Is Unable to Account for Trillions in Taxpayer Dollars

“The Department of Defense is the only federal agency unable to get a clean audit opinion.” The Department of Defense Inspector General’s report also confirms a 2013 finding that “Defense Finance and Accounting Service supervisors pressured accountants to plug in false numbers to make the Navy’s totals match the Treasury Department’s accounts.” This is likely true of Army numbers too. Smithberger, Mandy. *“Inspector General Finds Army Unable to Account for Trillions in Taxpayer Dollars”*. **The Defense Monitor**. 45:3. Sept. 2016.

Worship Resources

Make Prayers for peace part of your worship

Remember in prayer:

1. **Nigeria:** for the 21 Chibok school girls who have been released. Remember their families and communities. The 197 Chibok girls and others still missing EYN, all those affected by the violence.
2. **Bangladesh** – brutal attacks by Islamist militants on minority groups including non-Muslims and intellectuals are rising.
3. **Those facing execution** – & those willing to execute because they put revenge above redemption & forgiveness
4. **People affected by gun violence.**
5. **All people in this world who live with war.**

6. **People facing torture.**
7. **South Sudan:** has the worst human rights record in the world – women & children burned alive; women & girls raped; parents forced to watch children gang raped; children forced to watch parents killed; children taken from families as ‘payment’ by soldiers; their government is responsible for most of this.
8. **People affected by gun negligence** – at least 278 children under 18 unintentionally shot themselves or someone else in 2015; 100 + such cases already in 2016. Many shooters are toddlers. . .
9. **Mothers & children in prison** – more than 1,000 mothers & their children fleeing violence in their home countries are held in U.S detention camps. More unaccompanied children are seeking safety now than when the story broke in May 2015.
10. **Those in prison** because of their beliefs.
11. **Yemen** & other places where the U.S. regularly launches drone attacks – often hitting civilians.
12. **People Displaced** because of war or political unrest.
13. **Veterans’** living with their part in war. 18 U.S. Iraq/Afghanistan veterans commit suicide every day. (US Veterans Affairs statistics)
14. All those whose lives are dominated by **fear**.
15. People **working for peace** locally and in the world.
16. Those who **do not know the peace of God** in their lives & have lost sight of hope & joy.
17. **Girls & Women** facing abuse and violence every day
18. **Child Soldiers**
19. **Community – Police issues**, that communities and police will work together respectfully with each other for the common good.
20. **Those now waging war by remote control** – those who push buttons from far away that hurt or killed men, women, children
21. **Syrian refugee crises** – thousands continue to seek refuge; fewer and fewer countries are willing to help

Forgive

Lord, forgive us for the unintended hurt we cause. So often we act or speak with out thinking. We do not listen and so do not hear the pain and hurt in people around us. We let self-righteousness get in the way of understanding and empathy. We let our agenda get in the way of seeing the needs of others. Open our hearts, our eyes and our minds. Move us to love as you love. Lead us to speak and act as you would speak and act. Help us to be as forgiving as we want to be forgiven. Amen

Hurting

Lord, sometimes we live in a hurting place. Sometimes the darkness of sorrow overwhelms us and there seems to be no light left. Remind us to cling to you and wait till in your love, we can light a candle. Amen



See specific articles for related resource information.

Hot off the Press: *Speak Peace: A Daily Reader.* edited by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Clayford. Brethren Press.

A collection of readings about peace & peacemaking featuring Brethren & non-Brethren writers present & past.



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