Karen’s Kounsel

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## glassswing butterfly.jpg

KLynn Counseling

a place for new beginnings

Something of vengeance I had tasted for the first time; as aromatic wine it seemed, on swallowing, warm and racy; its after-flavor, metallic and corroding, gave me a sensation as if I had been poisoned**.**

**-** [**Charlotte Bronte**](http://www.famousquotesandauthors.com/authors/charlotte_bronte_quotes.html)

Last month’s newsletter talked about “the psychology of meaning” – how people who have experienced tragedy or trauma can find healing by bringing meaning out of those times. This month is a continuation of that theme. In so many of our difficult times there is someone we blame, someone who has caused us this pain. It can be the person who betrayed us, who stuck the knife in at just the right place, or who did something offensive and is totally oblivious to the injury they have caused. Doesn’t it always astound you how they can go merrily on their way with a smile on their face and not even remember the incident at all? (Oh, could I tell you a few stories! And I bet you could tell me a few too.) We rehearse it in our own minds and to our friends (who sympathize with us). Sometimes the wound goes much deeper. Sometimes that person may have subjected us to many years of abuse. That is something that should never be minimized or taken lightly, but it can be forgiven.

Why is forgiveness so important? Why is it an integral part of healing? Why is holding on to offenses and keeping unforgiveness bubbling around inside us so harmful? I’d like to look at just a few of the possible answers to those questions this month, so make a pot of coffee or brew a cup of tea, find a nice quiet place to sit back and search your heart. Let’s talk over the hurt together and see if we can find a little peace for the soul.

One of the greatest benefits of forgiveness is that it brings freedom. When we continue to be angry at someone it takes up our thoughts, our feelings, and our emotions. We repeat it in our minds and get angrier. It colors how we view things. That person, along with that incident, or perhaps multiple incidents, pop up at all kinds of odd moments and can spoil times that should be joyful. All of this means that the person who you cannot bring yourself to forgive is with you everywhere you go. They take up residence in your mind, they spoil those happy times – in other words they control your life. Unforgiveness is a subtle form of slavery to the person who you like the least! Instead of being free of them you are carrying them around on your back like a burden. Forgiveness cuts the ties that are binding you together with that person and puts them in the hands of God. You can be assured that God is both just and merciful and he knows exactly how to handle that person. And you are FREE of the burden!

Another benefit of forgiveness is that it brings healing. And that healing comes in many forms. Mentally it’s like taking a deep cleansing breath. Look at an angry person. That’s not difficult because you can usually tell when someone is continually angry. It shows in their face, in their body language, even in their responses to others around them who they are not angry with. It is hard to be around someone who is constantly angry and holding onto unforgiveness. And it’s little side partners can be depression and anxiety. Unforgiveness is mentally suffocating.

Physically it also can do damage. A chronic state of anger lessens the release of hormones that temper the effects of adrenaline. A nervous system on constant high alert can lead to heart problems, high cholesterol, stiffer arteries, and more. It really is like a corrosive poison in our system. Is what you are holding against someone worth all this?

So we see that there are both mental and physical results of unforgiveness, but there is a third consequence even more important. That consequence is spiritual. There are many admonitions in scripture that tell us we need to forgive. In the Lord’s Prayer we are told to pray ***“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”.*** Jesus warned that “***if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will you Father forgive your trespasses” Matthew 6:15.*** Sins or wrongs done to someone are described as a debt. Either something you owe or that someone owes you. So unforgiven sin piles up like debt. Anyone who has ever been drowning in debt knows what that is like. It seems impossible to get out of, the interest keeps piling up as does your stress level, and it keeps you chained to it. Debt makes you a slave. Think of unforgiveness that way. It bogs you down, causes stress, and enslaves you. Forgiveness sets you free! It lifts the weight of debt off of your shoulders. God takes it and carries it for you. Read Matthew 18:23-35. This parable told by Jesus about the two debtors is crystal clear. When you hold onto anger and the wrongs someone has done you, you are in a prison of your own making.

So why is this great truth so hard to put into practice? Many people believe that when they forgive the person who has wronged them, that means that they must allow them back into their life, that they are doomed to a life of being continually subjected to further abuse. NO! Nothing is further from the truth. That would only pile up more debt! It would be like working long hours to make more money to pay back creditors, you finally get the last bill PAID IN FULL, and then you immediately begin to rack up more credit card debt until you were soon back where you started! That would not be wise or prudent! It would mean you had not really dealt with the reason you are unable to control your spending!

So it is with in dealing with people who have wronged or abused us. Now if the wrong was minor or not chronic, then a relationship can many times be restored. It is a joyful happening. But when this person is abusive or chronically hurtful, then appropriate boundaries must be set in order to protect yourself – loving, wise boundaries. Setting boundaries in your life is the subject of our next newsletter. For now, take some time to sit down in a quiet undisturbed place and search your heart. Who in your life are you chained to by hard feelings and unforgiveness? Start releasing those people from the debt they owe you. Let go of the feelings of bitterness and anger. Ask the Lord to help you and to heal those stony places in your heart that have been made hard in order to protect yourself. You will be amazed how freeing it is. You will enjoy being able to take a long deep breath.

