



But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. -

Matthew 15:9

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For-giving

It made the news this week. The children of a certain woman published her obituary with a note that she would not be missed. They pointed out that she had a child by someone other than their father and that she abandoned them.

The comments on that news story were almost as interesting as the story itself. Some people were upset that they were not showing respect for the dead. Others seemed to think the woman had earned the disrespect of her children. There were even repercussions for the newspaper that published the criticizing obituary. Some felt the paper should have refused to publish it.

I'm a little uncertain about the need to respect the dead. People need respect when they're alive. After they're dead it won't matter to anyone but the friends and relatives of the deceased. It certainly won't matter to the dead person.

The issue I see in the story is what it reveals about the brother and sister who wrote and submitted the obituary. It should be clear that they had not forgiven their mother. There is some indication that the woman had come to regret her mistake, though it wasn't clear what, if anything, she had done to make it right with her first two children.

But the real losers in this situation are the two unforgiving children. They cannot harm this woman any more. She's dead. The only ones they harm with their need to vent their anger is themselves. By refusing to forgive they put themselves in a mindset that prevents them from recognizing and therefore repenting from their own sins. They put themselves in a position where they cannot receive God's forgiveness and achieve the healing that results.

We live in a world where wrongs happen. All too often wrongs happen that

weren't intended to be wrongs. When the victims of these wrongs hold grudges and refuse to forgive, they block the way for their own healing. And let's be clear; one person's refusal to forgive another does not prevent God from forgiving the offender.

Why do we find it hard to forgive? It's in the last four letters of the word. In order to forgive we have to give. We have to give the offender whatever we perceive they have taken from us. Giving requires unselfish love.

When you stop to think about it, God is the ultimate giver. Because his life is underived, he receives nothing. All he ever does is give. So in order to become more godly we need to practice giving. Your giving does not have to be to a church in order for you to practice godliness. Any giving, including your willingness to forgive wrongs against you, will do.

God bless you this weekend,

Elkanah

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