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Drinking Poison?

By Teresa Hampton

Someone once said that harboring unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. Consider, for a moment, the poison of unforgiveness. Perhaps, at the beginning, there is an odd satisfaction, as if unforgiveness is some type of punishment for the wrongdoer. However, it weakens us spiritually. A spirit of unforgiveness nurtures vindictive thinking, which leads ultimately to evil deeds, like slander or vengeance. It destroys one emotionally, physically, *and* spiritually.

Jesus spoke of the importance of forgiveness in the model prayer (Matt. 6:12). In His divine commentary at the end of the prayer, He said we must extend forgiveness to *others* if we want God to forgive *us*. Later, He told the parable of the unmerciful or unforgiving servant. The master was moved with compassion and forgave the servant's enormous financial debt. The servant promptly went out and found one who owed him a small amount. Without mercy, he threw him into prison. When the master learned of his unforgiving deed, his lack of pity, he delivered him over to the torturers until he could repay the large debt. Jesus said, *So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses* (Matt. 18:35).

When we hold resentment, bitterness, and unforgiveness toward someone we perceive has wronged us, we are drinking poison that seeps into every part of our being. We may try to cling to God while nurturing an unforgiving spirit toward another person, but we cannot receive God's forgiveness and mercy unless we first freely grant it to others.

Today's challenge: As I near the end of 2009, I will forgive those who have wronged me, and commit to maintain a spirit of forgiveness the rest of my days.

Today's Verse: *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you* (Ephesians 4:32).

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