

Break the Rules: Forgive Your Enemies

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they’re doing.”

1. The worst person is accepted by the best person.

“In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.” (Matthew 27:44)

Being guilty of dishonesty makes you a sinner, but it doesn’t necessarily make you a dishonest person.

“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

(1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.” (James 2:10-11)

2. The worst situation can create the best opportunity.

When you’re suffering, you can choose to become a better person, or a bitter person.

“Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.” (Job 7:11)

“It’s ironic that the ones who deserved punishment were bitter...and the One who didn’t deserve punishment was not!”

When they lashed out at Him, Jesus refused to react and lash back. He chose to act in a way that honored His Father.

3. Admitting your sin can lead to forgiveness.

“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:23-24)

We fear that admitting our sin would lead to shame, in reality, it leads to forgiveness!

4. Thinking clearly about death can lead you to eternal life.

Four signs of true repentance:

- **Respect for God’s Authority.** *“Don’t you fear God?”*
- **Admission of Sin.** *“We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve.”*
- **Accurate Belief in Jesus.** *“This man has done nothing wrong.”*
- **Humble Trust in Jesus.** *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”*

*“With those words, an unnamed thief becomes the only one we know of to speak to Jesus on the cross without derision or mockery. An unnamed thief is the only person in the Bible who calls Jesus by His personal name, without any kind of title attached, as if their mutual suffering has placed them on an intimate, first name basis. In so doing, he becomes the first to address Jesus the way most of us do today. And with his words, that unnamed thief becomes the first to be drawn to the crucified Christ.” (Michael Card from *Violent Grace*)*

"I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him." (Luke 12:4-5)

We place our faith in Jesus by:

- **Believing in Jesus.**
- **Admitting and repenting of our sin.**
- **Surrendering our hearts to Jesus by confessing Him as Lord.**
- **Expressing that faith in Baptism.**