

## Forgiving an Assailant

How important is forgiveness? It plays a greater role in our wellbeing than most people might expect. The Bible has much to say about the value of forgiveness, and President Ronald Reagan understood that principle.

While the nation -- and the world -- was saying goodbye to our 40th president last week, a Hollywood producer named Bryan Hickox, with whom I spent some time in Nashville, told this story:

"Both my wife and I had decided to join Bel Air Presbyterian Church. We had been attending there for several months and really liked the preaching style of its senior pastor, the ex-all-American football star Don Moomaw. To join, Dr. Moomaw required each prospective member to attend 10 three-hour, Sunday evening training sessions. The rule was that if you missed more than one session, you could not become a member (until you re-took the 10-session class again).

"Then-California Governor Ronald Reagan and his wife, Nancy, attended the membership sessions with us. Due to his busy schedule, the governor missed three of the sessions and was not allowed to become a member with the rest of us.

"Not long after becoming a member at Bel-Air, Dr. Lloyd Ogilvie asked me to come to Hollywood Presbyterian Church to direct his 'Let God Love You' television ministry. So my wife and I had our membership transferred to Hollywood Presbyterian. I stayed there for over eight years. When I left 'Let God Love You,' I wanted to return to what I felt was my home church, Bel Air Presbyterian. I called my friend, Don Moomaw, who told me that he could not just transfer our membership back to Bel Air, but that we would have to go through the entire 10 three-hour course once again.

"Upon attending the first session, we were surprised to see that then-President Ronald Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan were also in our same class again. This time they made every class and were introduced with all of the other 26 people who joined in that class on an incredible Sunday morning in 1992. That Sunday evening, as was the custom, the entire new members' class was hosted at Dr. Moomaw's home for an informal get-together. We all went around the room to share with the others some way that God had changed our lives.

(more)

"When it came to President Reagan, he and Nancy recounted the story about two days after being shot by John Hinckley, President Reagan had his Secret Service detail sneak him out, undetected, through the back entrance of the hospital. He instructed them to take him to the prison where John Hinckley was being incarcerated. The President felt that God needed him to forgive John Hinckley before he himself could be healed. That night, in secret, President Ronald Reagan forgave John Hinckley. That story, at the President's request, has never been made public. That's just the kind of man President Ronald Reagan was."

The incident certainly provides a measure of the man and his faith. How about forgiving someone today who has wronged you?

--Beecher Hunter