

Let the Past Be the Past

Steve Goodier, an ordained United Methodist minister and founder and publisher of *Your Life Support System*, a widely read newsletter, tells this story:

An elderly Virginia woman lived to see her beloved Richmond occupied by Union troops after the American Civil War.

The matron was walking down a Richmond street when she tripped over a step and fell. A Union soldier courteously helped her up.

“How very kind of you, young man,” she said acidly. “If there is a cool spot in hell, I hope you get it.”

Maybe it was still a bit early for her to let go of those deep-seated resentments. But angry and bitter lives are never the goal.

A beautiful legend tells of an African tribe that ritualizes forgiveness. When a tribe member acts irresponsibly or unjustly, the offender is taken to the center of the village. All work ceases and every man, woman and child in the village gathers in a large circle around the accused.



Then the tribe bombards the rejected person with affirmations! One at a time, friends and family enumerate all the good the individual has done. Every incident, every experience that can be recalled with some detail and accuracy is recounted. All their positive attributes, strengths and kindnesses are recited carefully and at length.

Finally, the tribal circle is broken, a joyous celebration takes place, and the outcast is welcomed back into the tribe.

“What a beautiful ritual of restoration,” Goodier said. “They replace hurt with happiness; pain with peace. Once again, they are family. The rejected one is restored and the village is made whole.”

The late author Paul Boese, a regular contributor to *Quote: The Weekly Digest*, said: “Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.”

As associates of Life Care and Century Park, we are in the relationship business, required to deal with one another in a spirit of trust, respect and dependency to achieve the optimum results in our mission of care and serving. In the course of our work, resentment and hard feelings may develop – perhaps through misunderstandings, differences of opinion, poor communication or the intensity of the moment.

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To attain the best results for our residents and families and the joy of the working environment, those injured relationships must be mended through forgiveness, an intentional and voluntary process of letting go of negative emotions. Mustering up genuine compassion for those who have wronged us, instead of allowing anger to eat away at us, is the course of action recommended by most psychologists.

And it is biblical:

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter