

# The Amish and Forgiveness

All was well in the Amish community of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 2006 until a deranged man mercilessly shot eight out of 10 Amish girls, aged 6 to 13, killing five, and then turned the gun on himself. The incident happened in West Nickel Mines School, an Amish one-room schoolhouse.

How did they respond to this shocking loss?

Amazingly, the Amish community didn't blame or look for revenge. Instead, they reached out with grace and compassion toward the killer's family. They understood the importance of forgiveness, but it wasn't for the killer's sake; he was dead. It was for them.

Why? Because living in unforgiveness is debilitating.

Most of us will never have to endure that depth of pain and offense; yet most bitter people didn't become that way through the act of a single dagger. Most of them are dying from a thousand paper cuts: the girl who rejected him, the backroom deal in some company that cost him a promotion, the humiliation experienced years ago by a father's rage.

Whether we can reconcile the relationship or not, we must still choose to forgive. When we don't, we get stuck. We fantasize vindication. We cling to bitterness as our beverage of choice. We talk about it to others who have no business hearing. We dream of going back, saying something more damaging, taking revenge. For many, this kind of thinking becomes a lifestyle that poisons every relationship. It's insidious.



Jesus is clear. In order to experience the Father's forgiveness, we must forgive. That's easy to say, but hard to do. Yet this is a primary hallmark of Christian manhood or womanhood. It's a heart issue that will wreck you or redeem you.

Who knows? Forgiveness might even save your life.

*But if you don't forgive people, your Father will not forgive your wrongdoing (Matthew 6:15).*

– Beecher Hunter