

Sermon Notes for February 12, 2017

Sermon Series On The Parables Of Jesus “Is There Someone You Need To Forgive?” Matthew 18:21-35

A lady was sick, so she went to the Doctor. The Doctor examined her, ran a number of tests and told her the bad news. **"I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but I'm afraid you've contracted rabies."** The Doctor left the room for a minute, and when he returned the woman was busy writing on a piece of paper. He asked, **"What are you doing, writing your will?"** She said, **"No, I'm making a list of all the people I'm going to bite."**

Introduction

A. The Christian's Greatest **PROBLEM**

1. I became ordained in the Gospel Ministry in June of 1977.
 - a. In June of this year, I will have been in the ministry for 40 years.
 - b. And, I have seen all kinds of problems
 - c. And yet, the one all-inclusive problem that I have seen in Christians is a **struggle with forgiving others.**
 1. The **first problem** of Christians is that they struggle with the **image** of being a Christian
 - a. And, they conclude that they couldn't, shouldn't, and wouldn't have a "problem" with another person
 - b. After all, "I'm a Christian" and Christians are supposed to love one another.
 2. The **second problem** of Christians is that they don't usually recognize **when they have become angry with another person**, especially another Christian.
 - a. a Christian comes into counseling and is "unhappy"
 - b. after asking lots of questions, we "finally" discover their anger against another person
 - c. "I hate my mother!"
2. so, let me say to all of you today; please don't assume that you don't need to hear this message.
 - a. Me - Columbia - depression
 - b. Over the years - **the** problem in my life.
 - c. EVERY MORNING I ASK GOD TO REVEAL ANY HATRED IN MY LIFE

B. The Christian's Greatest **PERSPECTIVE.**

1. I want you to know something about the Word of God . . . **THIS IS A BOOK ABOUT FORGIVENESS! FORGIVENESS IS ITS MESSAGE!**
 - a. **in the Garden of Eden** – after **Adam and Eve** fell into sin, God prophesied that He would send a solution to bring about their forgiveness

- b. **in the sacrificial system** – all of the **blood spilled** in the sacrifices represented the **need for forgiveness** for the sinner
- c. **John the Baptist** proclaimed at the coming of Jesus Christ in **John 1:29** – “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, **who takes away the sin of the world!**”
- d. Jesus Christ **BOLDLY** proclaimed **THE REASON WHY HE CAME TO THIS EARTH . . . John 3:16** - "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him **shall not perish but have eternal life.**"
 - 1. Jesus’ ministry was and is a ministry of forgiveness
 - a. the man at the pool
 - b. the woman at the well
 - c. the woman caught in adultery
 - 2. **EVEN AS JESUS CHRIST WAS DYING ON THE CROSS, HE FORGAVE HIS EXECUTIONERS!**
Luke 23:34 - “Father, **forgive them** for they know not what they are doing.”

2. **SO, WHY DID JESUS CHRIST COME TO THIS EARTH?**

- a. man fell into sin
- b. and Jesus came to forgive man’s fall into sin
- c. Jesus’ death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins was prophesied in the 3rd Chapter of the book of Genesis!
Genesis 3:15 – “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; **he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.**”

B. Christ’s Wonderful PARABLE.

- 1. In today’s text, Jesus shares His perspective on forgiveness in a parable.
 - a. in this parable, you will see that **JESUS IS TOTALLY COMMITTED TO FORGIVENESS**
- B. AND BELIEVERS SHOULD BE TOO**
- 2. Jesus told His disciples this parable because they needed, like us, to understand Jesus’ perspective and commitment to forgiveness.
 - a. **Jesus** had introduced TO His disciples the concept of dealing with other people who had wronged them.
Matthew 18:15 - "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.”
 - b. with that in mind, **Peter** asked Jesus a “**noble question**”
Matthew 18:21 – “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, **how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?**"
 - 1. we must realize how “noble” Peter’s question was:
 - a. the typical Jew believed that you were only to forgive someone three times and no more
 - 1. **Amos 1:3** – “This is what the LORD says: "For **three sins of Damascus**, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath.”

2. The **Rabbi's view** – “If a brother sins against you **once**, forgive him, a **second time**, forgive him, a **third time**, forgive him, **but a fourth time, do not forgive him.**”
 - b. so . . . Peter was going “beyond” the number of forgiving someone 3 times to the Biblically perfect number of 7.
2. but, we must also realize how “extreme” was Jesus’ response to Peter’s “noble” question.

Vs. 22 – “Jesus answered, “I tell you, not **seven times, but seventy times seven.**”

 - a. notice Jesus’ answer to Peter’s “noble” question
 - b. we must be careful not to be literal here
 1. if Jesus did not mean literally 7 times . . .
 2. the we should forgive “only” 490 times
 3. **JESUS’ GOAL HERE . . . WAS NOT TO BE LITERAL AT ALL!**
 - c. in my opinion, Jesus took Peter’s 7 and “**exponentially**” multiplied it
 1. He took the 7 suggested by Peter and multiplied it by 10 times!
 2. **IN OTHER WORDS, THERE IS NO LIMIT TO THE TIMES THAT YOU ARE TO FORGIVE ANOTHER PERSON!**
 3. let me ask you a question: how many times do you want God to forgive you? Do you want a limit on God’s forgiveness?

I. The Parable Of The Unmerciful Accountant **EXPLAINED.**

A. The Accountant Was A **DEBTOR.**

Vs. 23-25 - "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a King who wanted to **settle accounts with his servants**. As he began the settlement, **a man who owed him ten thousand talents** was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt."

1. A King had a servant who was his tax collector or accountant.
 - a. apparently the King hired certain men to collect taxes for him
 - b. it was found out that one of these men owed the King some **10,000 talents** (the tax collector had apparently embezzled the money)
 1. a talent was about 75 lbs. of gold
 2. **10,000 talents** would be approximately **750,000 lbs. of gold**
 3. in the troy weight of 12 oz.: (1320.00 the current price for gold per troy oz.) would be approximately **13,200,000,000** in today’s money (yes, that’s 13 billion dollars!)
 4. The Greek word for ten thousand is **urias**.
 - a. it is the largest numerical term in the Greek language
 - b. it is a word used to represent a vast, uncountable number
 - c. from where we get the English word; **myriad**

5. historical documents have determined:
 - a. that the total annual revenue collected by the Roman government by **Idumea, Judea, Samaria and Galilee** was about 900 talents
 - b. based on those figures, ten thousand talents amounted to more than **11 years of taxes** from those four provinces!
 2. Once the King discovered the financial discrepancy, he called the guilty accountant to appear before him.
 - a. In Jesus' day, there was actually a debtor's prison in which those who could not pay their debts would be put. So, this was a decision that the King could have made.
 - b. When this man was called before the King, the King demanded that the man pay him back the entire amount that he had stolen or he would be sent with his entire family to the debtor's prison
 3. Once the man understood the King's demands, notice:
 - a. the man's **posture**
Vs. 26 – "The servant **fell on his knees before him.**"
 1. the man fell down on his face prostrate before the King
 2. the word for fell down is actually used in worship, suggesting that the man touched the ground with his head in bowing before the King.
 - b. the man's **promise**
Vs. 26 – "Be patient with me, he **begged** and **I will pay back everything.**"
 1. the man began to say that he would pay it all back! - a 13 billion dollar debt!
 - a. Someone has figured that; at the average pay that this man made each day, it would take him **37,415,820 years** to pay back the total amount to the King! (almost as futile as attempting to pay back a credit card debt)
 - b. If an army carried 10,000 talents with 8,600 soldiers each carrying a sack of gold coins 60 lbs. in weight, they would form, at a distance of a yard apart, **a line five miles long.**
- 2. OBVIOUSLY, THIS MAN HAD NO CHANCE WHATSOEVER TO PAY THE KING BACK WHAT HE HAD STOLEN**
4. However, after hearing the man's fervent, emotional pleas, the King was deeply moved at the attitude of his unfaithful accountant.
Vs. 27 - "The servant's master **took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.**"
 - a. because of the man's earnest plea, the King was moved with compassion for the man
 1. the Greek word **splagchnizomai** (splagchon)
 - a. to be moved in one's bowels
 - b. the King was emotionally moved "in his stomach"
 2. obviously, the accountant deeply touched the King

- b. **AND THEN THE KING FORGAVE THE MAN'S DEBT!**
 - 1. the King forgave the man a 13 billion dollar debt!
 - 2. **AND SO, THE ACCOUNTANT WAS FREE TO GO!**
 - a. to be set free
 - b. to be loosed
 - c. after stealing some 13 billion dollars from the King, he King sent him home, "Scott Free!" **WITH NO DEBT!**
 - 3. the disobedient thief would not have to pay one penny of the 13 billion dollars that he had stolen!

B. The Accountant Was A CREDITOR.

- 1. **AS THE FORGIVEN ACCOUNTANT WAS LEAVING THE KING'S PALACE**, he ran into a man who owed him some money.
Vs. 28 - "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a **hundred denarii's**. He grabbed him and began to choke him. **'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.**"
 - a. As the forgiven accountant was leaving the King's palace, he ran into a man who owed him some money.
 - b. Jesus says in the parable that the man owed the unjust accountant **100 denarii**
 - 1. a denarii was a day's wages – about \$1.00 a day, so 100 day's pay
 - 2. at today's minimum wage of \$7.25/hour, that would roughly be **\$725.00** that the man owed the accountant
 - c. upon seeing the man, the unjust accountant grabbed the man by the neck, began to choke him and **DEMANDED** that he pay him the 100 denarii or he would throw the man into debtor's prison
- 2. Notice the man who owed the money:
 - a. the man's **posture**
Vs. 29 – "His fellow servant **fell to his knees and begged him.**"
 - 1. just like the unjust accountant before the King, this man fell on his face prostrate before the unjust accountant
 - 2. and, just like the unjust accountant, he actually took a posture of worship, falling on his face before the King's accountant
 - b. the man's **promise**
Vs. 29 – "Be **patient with me and I will pay you back.**"
 - 1. and just like the unjust servant before the King, **THIS MAN ALSO PROMISED TO PAY THE ACCOUNTANT BACK**
 - 2. but, unlike the unjust accountant, **THIS MAN COULD HAVE PAID IT BACK!**
 - c. the man who owed the money to the unjust accountant did and said the **SAME EXACT THING** that the accountant said to the King.
- 3. **BUT NOTICE WHAT THE UNJUST ACCOUNTANT DID.**
Vs. 30 – "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt."
 - a. because the man could **not** pay back the debt of \$725.00 immediately, **HE THREW THE MAN WHO OWED HIM THE DEBT INTO DEBTOR'S PRISON**

b. all for **\$725.00!**

4. PLEASE NOTICE THE JUSTICE OF IT ALL.

Vs. 31 – “When the **other servants saw what had happened**, they were **greatly distressed** and **went and told their master everything that had happened.**”

- a. the servants of the King who had personally witnessed the King’s forgiveness of the unjust accountant HAPPENED TO SEE THE ENTIRE SITUATION TRANSPIRE AND WERE MORTIFIED
 1. for, the King’s servants had personally witnessed that the accountant had “just” been forgiven of 13 billion dollars that he had stolen from the King
 2. and here, the unjust accountant would **not** forgive another man of less than \$725.00! – **EXACTLY 1/20,000TH OF 1% OF WHAT THE UNJUST ACCOUNTANT OWED THE KING!**
- b. so, the King’s servants went immediately to the King to tell him what the unjust accountant had just done.

C. The Accountant Became A **DEBTOR**.

1. Once the servants told the King what had happened, the King became very, very angry.

Vs. 32-34 - "Then the master called the servant in. '**You wicked servant,**' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' **In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.**"

- a. The Greek words for “in anger”
 1. vengeful
 2. wrathful
 3. indignant
 4. anger that would provoke him to punish
 - b. the King was extremely angry and was going to make sure that there would be punishment
2. As a result of seeing the lack of grace of the unjust accountant whom the King had forgiven, the King would now throw the unjust accountant into the debtor’s prison.
- a. where the accountant would remain until he could pay for his 13 billion dollar debt - a debt that he would never, ever pay off
 - b. **OBVIOUSLY**, the unjust accountant would spend the rest of his life in prison

II. The Parable Of The Unmerciful Accountant APPLIED.

A. The Christian Is A DEBTOR.

1. IN MY OPINION, JESUS WAS ATTEMPTING TO SHOW THE ABSOLUTELY MONUMENTAL DEBT THAT BELIEVERS OWE GOD BECAUSE OF THEIR OWN SIN.

- a. **ACCORDING TO JESUS; THIS EXTREME AMOUNT REPRESENTES JUST HOW GREAT OUR OWN SIN IS BEFORE A HOLY GOD**

1. regarding our sins, we owe God some 13 billion dollars - and we make minimum wage
 2. **THERE IS NO HOPE WHATSOEVER OF EVER BEING ABLE TO “PAY” GOD ENOUGH TO FORGIVE US OF OUR SINS**
 - b. let me make it more personal for you
EE – record book of sins
2. Notice:
- a. **our posture**
 1. so, because we **know** that we cannot possibly pay for our sins, we throw ourselves down and beg God for mercy
 2. we know that we can never be righteous enough to go to heaven on our own merit
 - a. we have far too many sins
 - b. we owe “too much money”
 - c. regarding the “amount” that we owe for our sins, it is absolutely hopeless
 - b. **our promise**
 1. and we promise and swear that we will follow Him and not sin again
 2. we promise, once again, that we will be Godly
3. **AND HE FORGIVES US!**
- a. HE FORGIVES ONE WHO WORKS AT MCDONALD’S AND HAS A 13 BILLION DOLLAR DEBT **TO REPAY!**
 - b. AND, BECAUSE GOD FORGIVES US, WE ARE FREE TO GO

B. The Christian Becomes A CREDITOR.

1. **BUT . . .** no sooner do we walk away from the gracious forgiving throne room of God
 - a. where we have been forgiven a 13 billion dollar debt
 - b. a debt that we had no ability to repay
2. We bump into a person who has “wronged us” – **AND WE DEMAND PAYMENT . . . RIGHT NOW!**
 - a. they have hurt us
 1. “They offended me at work.”
 2. “They hurt my feelings.”
 3. “They rejected me.”
 - b. and, we demand \$725.00 – while we have been forgiven 13 billion dollars!

C. The CHRISTIAN BECOMES A DEBTOR.

1. often I hear from some believers that God is never angry with Christians no matter what they do, because God is “so gracious”

- a. As one of those who have such a view of grace.
 “Many Christians today have created a God who seethes at our failings, blunders and mishaps; a God who peers over our shoulders clicking His tongue and whispering; “You’re going to pay for that; a God who is irritable and rigid—perhaps resembling our earthly fathers.
But, this is not the God of the Gospel. That God is capable of laughing at our mistakes, smiling when we bumble down the wrong path, and overlooking our misguided attempts to live the “good life” and follow Him well.”
 - b. **Westminster Confession of Faith** – “God does continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and, although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins **fall under God’s fatherly displeasure** and not have the light of His countenance restored unto them, **until** they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.”
2. Based on this parable taught by Jesus, the Lord does become angry with believers when:
- a. we overlook the enormous debt that He has forgiven us
 - b. and then DEMAND that the other person who owed us an apology make immediate payment or we will not forgive them.
 - c. **LOOK AT VERSE 35** - "This is **how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.**"
 - 1. God **will** hold believers accountable for NOT FORGIVING OTHER PEOPLE
 - a. you will be living in sin
 - b. and He will hold you accountable for that sin
 - 2. unless “**you forgive your brother from your heart**”
 - a. Jesus is not merely saying “that you forgive another with your mouth
 - b. no, he desires that we forgive someone FROM OUR HEARTS!

Conclusion:

1. **HOW** are believers to deal with forgiveness?
 - a. when **YOU** are at fault –

Matthew 5:23- 24 - "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that **your brother has something against you**, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”

 1. this is an occasion when **YOU are the one who is at fault – YOU** have sinned against another person
 2. **NOTICE THIS . . .**
 - a. whether you actually “did something wrong” against the other person
 - b. **OR** the other person “THINKS” that you have sinned against them

- c. **IT IS ALWAYS THE MORE MATURE BELIEVER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE TO RECONCILE WITH ANOTHER PERSON!**
 - 1. the immature believer “waits” for the other person to make the first step toward forgiveness
 - 2. while Jesus says that it is the believer's responsibility to seek and pursue forgiveness
- d. and . . . in **Matthew 5:23-24**, Jesus calls us to:

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

 - 1. leave church to deal with it. . . **TODAY!**
 - 2. Ultimately, Jesus says to the believer to **“QUIT PLAYING CHURCH”** while you are filled with hate and bitterness toward other people **AND GO DEAL WITH YOUR BITTERNESS: RIGHT NOW!**
 - 3. based on this parable told by Jesus, God is deeply grieved and even angry at the blatant hypocrisy of the unforgiving Christian.
- b. when **ANOTHER PERSON** is at fault

Matthew 18:15 - "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."

 - 1. DID YOU NOTICE THIS?
 - a. in this text, YOU were NOT at fault – THE OTHER PERSON WAS; THEY HURT YOU!
 - b. but YOU, as a committed follower of Jesus, are still to be **THE ONE** to initiate reconciliation!
 - 2. remember, it is always the more mature Christian who initiates reconciliation – whether that believer is guilty or not!
- 2. **WHAT** are the **steps of forgiveness?**
 - a. it involves **true confession** on your part
 - 1. you must **confess** your sin toward another **“Biblically”**
 - a. confess the literal sin of **hatred**
 - b. confess the literal sin of **bitterness**
 - c. confess the literal sin of **resentment**
 - 2. you may have to go to the person personally
 - a. but only if that other person knows that there is a problem (public sin)
 - b. otherwise, handle it privately between you and the Lord
 - b. it moves to **actual forgiveness**
 - 1. while repentance is the first step
 - 2. **FORGIVENESS IS A MOST NECESSARY “SECOND STEP”**
 - a. **DON'T MAKE THE MISTAKE OF THINKING THAT YOU MUST “WANT” TO FORGIVE BEFORE YOU DO SO**

1. forgiveness is an act of obedience
 2. in actuality, your hatred or bitterness of that other person would actually “prevent” you from ever “wanting” to forgive them
 - b. so, as the Nike commercial says, JUST DO IT!
 - c. my own experience as I learned about forgiveness
- c. it results in **true freedom**
1. do you know who the real “loser” is when you won’t forgive another person – **YOU ARE!**
 - a. How much **time** have you spent thinking about that person who has hurt you?
 - b. How many **sleepless nights** have you experienced fuming and being angry?
 - c. Do you think that that other person is **losing any sleep** over you?

II Corinthians 7:10 – “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and **leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.**”

3. **Don’t Wait**

The hospital was unusually quiet that bleak January evening, quiet and still like the air before a storm. I stood in the nurses’ station on the seventh floor and glanced at the clock. It was 9 p.m. I threw the stethoscope around my neck and headed for Room 712, the last room on the hall. **Room 712 had a new patient, Mr. Williams.** He was a man all alone; a man strangely silent about his family.

As I entered the room, Mr. Williams looked up eagerly but dropped his eyes when he saw that it was only me, his nurse. I pressed the stethoscope over his chest and listened. His heart was strong, slow in its even beating. **It was the sound that I wanted to hear. There seemed little indication he had suffered from a slight heart attack a few hours earlier.** Mr. Williams looked up from his starched white bed and asked; “Nurse, would you....” He hesitated, tears filling his eyes. Once before he had started to ask me a question but changed his mind. I touched his hand, waiting. He brushed away a tear. **“Would you call my daughter and tell her I had a heart attack; a slight one? You see, I live all alone and she is the only family I have.”** His respiration suddenly speeded up. I turned his nasal oxygen up to eight liters a minute. “Of course I’ll call her,” I said, studying his face. He gripped the sheets and pulled himself forward, his face tense with urgency. **“Will you call her right away- as soon as you can?” He was breathing fast – too fast.** “I’ll call her the very first thing,” I said, patting his shoulder. I flipped off the light. Room 712 was dark except for a faint night light under the sink. Oxygen gurgled in the green tubes above his bed. Reluctant to leave, I moved through the shadowy silence to the window. The panes were cold. Below a foggy mist curled through the hospital parking lot. **“Nurse,”**

he called,” could you get me a pencil and paper?” I dug a scrape of yellow paper and pen from my pocket and set it on the bedside table.

I walked back to the nurses’ station and sat in a squeaky swivel chair by the phone. **Mr. Williams’s daughter was listed on his chart as the next of kin.** I got her number from the information and dialed. Her soft voice answered. “Janie, this is Sue Kidd, a registered nurse at the hospital. I’m calling about your father. He was admitted tonight with a slight heart attack and....” **“No!”** she screamed into the phone, startling me. **“He’s not dying is he?”** “His condition is stable at the moment,” I said, trying hard to sound convincing. In silence, I bit my lip. **“You must not let him die!”** she said. Her voice was so utterly compelling that my hand trembled on the phone. “He is getting the very best care.” “But you don’t understand,” she pleaded. **“My daddy and I haven’t spoken in almost a year.** We had a terrible argument on my 21st birthday over my boyfriend. I ran out of the house. I....I haven’t been back. **All these months I’ve wanted to get his forgiveness. The last thing I said to him was, ‘I hate you.’”**

Her voice cracked and I heard her heave great agonizing sobs. I sat, listening with, tears burning down my face. A father and daughter, so lost to each other.

As Janie struggled to control her tears, I breathed a prayer. **“Please God, let this daughter find forgiveness.”** Janie said boldly; **“I’m coming. Now! I’ll be there in thirty minutes,”** she said. Click. She had hung up. I tried to busy myself with a stack of charts on the desk. I couldn’t concentrate. **Room 712;** I knew I had to go back to 712. I hurried down the hall nearly in a run. **I opened the door.**

Mr. Williams lay unmoving. I reached for his pulse but there was none.

Over and over we tried to get a pulse. But nothing. No response. **Mr. Williams was dead.** A nurse unplugged the oxygen. The gurgling stopped. One by one the nurses left, grim and silent. How could this happen? How? I stood by his bed stunned. A cold wind rattled the window, pelting the panes with snow.

Outside — everywhere — seemed a bed of blackness, cold and dark. **How could I face his daughter? When I left the room, I saw his daughter leaning against the wall by a water fountain.** A Doctor who had been inside Room 712 only moments before stood at her side, talking to her, gripping her elbow. **Then he moved on, leaving her slumped against the wall.** Such pathetic hurt reflected from her face; such wounded eyes. She knew. **The Doctor had told her that her father was gone.**

I took her hand and led her into the nurses' lounge. We sat on little green stools, neither saying a word. She stared straight ahead at the pharmaceutical calendar, glassed-faced, almost breakable looking. "Janie, I'm so, so sorry," I said. It was pitifully inadequate. **"I never hated him, you know. I loved him," she said.** `God, please help her`, I thought.

Suddenly, the daughter whirled toward me. **"I want to see him."** My first thought was, why put yourself through any more pain? Seeing him will only make it worse. But I got up and wrapped my arms around her. **We walked slowly down the corridor to Rm 712.** Outside the door I squeezed her hand, wishing she would change her mind about going inside but, she pushed open the door to the hospital room. We moved to the bed, huddled together, taking small steps in unison. Janie leaned over the bed and buried her face in the sheets. I tried not to look at her sad, sad good-bye. **I backed against the bedside table. My hand fell on a scrap of yellow paper. I picked it up. It read:**

"My dearest Janie, I forgive you. I pray that you will also forgive me. I know that you love me. I love you too. Daddy."

The note was shaking in my hands as I thrust it to Janie. She read it once. Then twice. Her tormented face grew radiant. Peace began to glisten in her eyes. She hugged the scrap of paper to her chest. **"Thank you, God," I whispered,** looking at the window. A few crystal stars blinked through the blackness. A snowflake hit the window and melted away, gone forever. Life seemed as fragile as a snowflake on the window. **But thank you, God, that relationships, sometimes as fragile as snowflakes, can be mended together again.**