**What is your oldest and most cherished grudge?**

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Kalamazoo Mennonite Fellowship

September 10, 2017

Matthew 18:18

Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

What a week this has been, and continues to be! Three hurricanes in a row, the administration denying DACA students, forest fires in the west, the terrible tragedies on the periphery of our attention in Pakistan and Tibet. And some of us have had tricky and difficult events in our own lives.

Honestly, I really don’t want to preach a heavy sermon this morning. I have a burden to bring honest and wise teachings—and, of course, I am very aware of how much I miss the mark at this—but, oh, it’s a heavy burden!

So, can we take a bit of a break? Can we just strive for a tiny bit of improvement this week, some small, personal task that we can do, and be better off for it? Not to ignore all the darkness around us, but to take a beat.

So, there’s a writer named Nicole Cliffe. I learned about her from my favorite section of *Christianity Today*, which is the section at the end, where people talk about how (usually as an adult) they came to the Christian faith. Her article was called, “How God Messed Up My Happy Atheist Life.”[[1]](#endnote-1) She was one of founders and editors of *The Toast*, a very funny website, mostly aimed, I think, at young women. But I did start following her on Twitter, where she is very prolific. She really doesn’t fit a standard *Christianity Today* profile at all.

On August 22, she posted the following tweet: “I am starting a new thread for ‘tell me your oldest, most cherished grudge.’”[[2]](#endnote-2) The last time I checked, it had 8,259 replies. It seems like everyone had some grudge they have cherished!

Like the woman, who as a young girl, who noticed that the clever boy in class had plagiarized a story from James Herriot, and no one believed her and her teacher called her jealous.

Or the man who, as a child, went to London for the first time and bought a little bear guardsman, and one of his playmates rubbed his nose off on a brick wall. (Later, she ended up in prison, which suited him just fine).

Or the innumerable teachers or parents or grandparents who told people they would never succeed.

Or the man who found out that his date was cancelled by listening to the outgoing message on his date’s answering machine.

Or the time “Santa” brought someone an Easy Bake Oven but Mom decided it was too dangerous and difficult to use, so the kid couldn’t get it. But Mom was Santa!

Or the time someone got a cookie, and ate it, but it was really a dog biscuit. Or the time someone put Crisco on a bagel by mistake, but Mom said they had to eat it anyway. With another person, it was ketchup on a strawberry shortcake.

Or the teacher who argued with a student about how to pronounce the student’s own name.

And several thousand more!

Teachers, and sisters, and brothers, and parents, and so-called friends, and enemies.

What’s *your* oldest and most cherished grudge? And by *grudge*, I don’t really want to focus on the big things, but those little things we hold on to for a long time. You think about yours, and I’ll tell you mine.

It was easy for me to think of one. I grew up in the sixties and early seventies, and way back then, children, we had something called “newspapers.” You may have heard about them? We got three different newspapers at our house (which I’m grateful for), the *Detroit Free Press*, the *Detroit News*, and *The Macomb Daily*. I collected them when big events happened. I don’t know if I have the papers from the day President Kennedy was shot (I was only seven at the time). But I definitely had the newspaper the day that humans first stepped foot on the moon. (Dad threw them out)

What is yours?

**Binding and loosing**

With respect to these grudges, Jesus comes to us with good news: “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” But what does *binding* and *loosing* mean? As it happens, I was talking to our friend Helder about this in Spanish, and so we looked up the verse in a few Spanish translations. They use *atar* and *desatar*, which simply mean “to tie (up)” and “to untie”. We have the power to untie, to release these grudges, to release our resentment to the person against we hold the grudge, to unbind the relationships we have with the other person which has been knotted up because of the original event, and our holding the grudge.

Is that good news?

This releasing, unbinding, untying is intimately connected to *forgiveness*. I might even go so far as to say releasing the grudge, no longer nursing it, *is* forgiveness.

Anyway, let me offer you this small gift. Reflect on the small grudge that came to mind, or whatever small grudge you might hold, and simply: release it. Say aloud, or write down, that you forgive the person for what they did, that you no longer desire to hold the grudge or tie up your good will in maintaining the bind. Do it now, and release it to God.

(time for silence)

But, hey, I want to note something else, and I think I might need to whisper it: Jesus also promises that what we *bind* on earth will be bound in heaven. Apparently, it’s ok sometimes ok to *not* release others. This is a kind of nuclear option, though. We are told several time that, is some shape or form, our forgiveness is contingent on our forgiving others. For example, in the Lord’s prayer: “Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sing against us. And Jesus tells us it’s more important to be reconciled with others that for us to start our own church: if we are at the altar, and remember some block between us and a fellow believer, we are to put the stuff we brought to the alter down, and rudh to reconcile.

So, perhaps I’ll come out of my whisper, and remind us to forgive.

My God bring you an extra portion of grace for this small, but still holy, moment of forgiving a small grudge.

By the way, here is the Free Press headline I’d saved:



1. Nicole Cliffe, “How God Messed Up My Happy Atheist Life,” *Christianity Today*, May 2016. http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/june/nicole-cliffe-how-god-messed-up-my-happy-atheist-life.html [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://twitter.com/Nicole_Cliffe/status/900073515348484096> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)