

Price Tags
Sermon on Genesis 50:14-21, Ephesians 4:26-32
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When I was 5 years old my dad was in the United States Marine Corps. My family had just moved back to the United States from Japan and was living in (Camp Pendleton) California. I was a scrawny little red headed boy with freckles; my dad was a big Marine who trained Marine recruits to be warriors. I remember one day going to the barracks (where marines in training lived) with my dad. When he went into his office, he told me to shoot some pool. I was so small that I could barely see the top of the table, much less see the different colored balls.

So I gripped the pool stick and aimed at the white ball, but I missed over and over -- breaking the tips off. The more I played the more I broke. After playing a short amount of time, a Marine recruit came up behind me and started to yell. In no time my dad walked right up behind him and scared him half to death!

“Recruit, who are you yelling at?” My dad spoke with a normal voice without giving any clue that I was his son.

“This @#*% kid! Some @#*% let this boy in here and he is breaking our sticks.” Still this man had no clue who I was. But this didn’t last much longer. Before the man continued, my dad reached out to him and nearly took his life. Not only was the man on the ground looking up at his now angry Drill Sergeant, he was looking into the eyes of a dad who let *no one* talk about *his son* like that.

Looking back, I admit that I cried and was afraid to ever step foot back into the barracks. I didn’t like to be called names and made fun of. I have never grown out of this. To this day I still get mad when someone mistakes me for my wife. And I still have to hold my tongue when I am called ma’am or Mrs.

Aren’t we all like this? Some of us have been picked on more than others. Take me for instance; I was born with something called a hared lip and a cleft pallet (hold finger up). Because of it I went through years of speech therapy and mockery. Like many of you, I had friends, classmates, and family make fun of me and hurt me.

Many of us have been given a price-tag with words written on it from those who have gone before us. Although each of our situations and circumstances are different, hurt is hurt and pain is pain.

In the movie, Saving Private Ryan, a task force headed up by Captain John Miller was directed by General George Marshall to cross enemy lines and find Private James Ryan - who had lost three brothers in the war - so he could go home to be with her. At the end of the movie, Captain Miller and his task force lose their lives for Private Ryan. Just before Captain Miller dies, he reaches up to Ryan and says three words that would stay with him forever: “James Earn This.” And for the rest of his life, James Ryan strived to live a life where he earned what was written on his price tag. (Have on hand)

→Each of us have been handed a price tag. Over the next few moments I would like you to write something on *one* of the sides that someone has said about you, that has hurt you. Write as much as you would like... (Refer to own price tag)

Open your Bibles to Genesis 50:14-21...

Joseph’s brothers acted out of hatred in Genesis 37:18-28 and wrote on his price tag... “Joseph, we want to kill you” (37:18). “Joseph, it’s time to kill you” (37:20). “Joseph, get ready for your home with the fishes... in the desert... without water” (37:22). “Joseph, you are only worth about 8 ounces of silver (valued at €162.64).”

Have phrases like this been written on your price tag? How did you react and what did you say? Have you believed them?

Some of us have been holding onto our price tags and living the life of a victim. And in doing so, we have become prisoners of our hurts and hatred... that has turned us into bitter people.

Job described it like this: "One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet ... And another dies in the bitterness of his soul, and never eats in pleasure" (Job 21:23, 25).

Fast forward to Genesis 50:20 where Joseph said to his brothers, "you intended to harm me..."

You see, forgiveness frees us to love those who have wrongly written on our price tag.

Joseph didn't deny what his brother's wrote, and he refused to let those words turn him into a bitter person. He simply responded with forgiveness.

Joseph understood three important principles: Only God has the right to judge another for the wrongs they do. He said in verse 19, "Am I in the place of God?"

Joseph's brothers wrote unjust things on his price tag. Even still, Joseph didn't make any excuses for them. He understood that they were accountable to God for their words, not to him.

You see, forgiveness is an act of our will in which we give up the right to hold another person accountable for what they wrote. And it means releasing that person from any responsibility to ever make things right.

Joseph also understood that Only God can change a bad situation for His good. Look again at verse 20, "God intended it for good." And he understood that God could re-write what others wrote on his price tag.

What the brother's wrote on Joseph's price tag were not good; even still, the results of those words didn't ruin his life. Because Joseph had forgiven his brothers, he could "reassure" and speak "kindly" to them (Verse 21).

Forgiveness frees us to love those who have written hurtful words on our price tags. You don't excuse what they wrote, or deny the hurt that they caused. You simply choose to give up the right to make them pay for what they wrote.

Forgiveness of those who wrongly wrote on your price tag frees you from the destructive habits of a bitter soul that the apostle Paul wrote about in Ephesians 4:26-32.

Choosing not to forgive gives Satan a "foothold" (a small area of residence and control) in our soul.

Many Christians have knelt at the altar, asking God to forgive them for their bitter and hateful actions, often promising to be different. But they can't because Satan still has a foothold in their soul due to past unforgiven offences.

Right about now you may be wondering what the destructive habits of a bitter person are: bitterness - hatred; rage - a feeling of intense anger (strong emotion); brawling - loud disagreement and fighting; slander - words falsely spoken that damage the reputation of another; and malice - feeling a need to see others suffer.

You can ask God to forgive these things, and He will. But until you forgive those who wrote hurtful things on your price tags, Satan will still control a part of your soul, causing you to be enslaved to these destructive habits of bitterness.

Friends, forgiveness of those who wrongly wrote on your price tag is God's way to freedom (Verse 32).

The key to forgiveness is to focus on what God has done for you. As God forgives (freely, undeserving) you are to forgive those who have hurt you.

The steps to freedom are:

- Let God forgive you
- Confess your own bitterness; selfish actions, and hateful speech
- Agree with God that your feelings of bitterness have no place in your life
- Thank God for the blood of Christ that cleanses you from sin

- Forgive those who have written on your price tag
- Release them from any obligation to make things right
- Extend to them the same grace God has given you
- Ask God to take possession of the foothold in your soul that Satan has claimed

Now look at what people have written on your price tag. Can you see the faces of those who wrote those hurtful words? Are you ready to take back your price tag by forgiving those who wrote on it? There's no better time than right now!

"But I *don't know* what to say." I suggest you pray something like this:

"Father, thank You for the blood of Christ that cleanses me from sin. I confess that I have wanted to get payback rather than forgive those who wrote hurtful things on my price tag.

(Tell God exactly what you've done.)

"God, I forgive (name) for (be specific). In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the power of His blood, I take back the foothold that Satan possessed in my soul and give it back to You. In Jesus' name. Amen."

{Beautiful}

Now, maybe your reflection on what others have written on your price tag has reminded you of what you have written on others price tags. Can you see their faces? Are you ready to give them back their price tags?

It starts by asking God for forgiveness of what you wrote on someone else's price tag. Then go to them and seek their forgiveness.

Now, in closing, flip your price tag over and write what God thinks about you. He writes... I love you! You are wonderfully and fearfully made by Me! You are My priceless child! My love for you never runs dry! I created the sunrise and sunset for you! I am by your side! You are worth the wait! I placed that birthmark there out of love! Your singing pleases Me! You are My masterpiece! Never will I leave you or forsake you! I planned on you! The birds sing My love for you! Your name is written on My hand! I will always love you! I sent My Son to the cross for you! You are My sunshine! I will listen when you call! You are the apple of My eye! I call you faithful available teachable! You are so beautiful to Me! You look marvelous!

{Amazing Grace}

- Forgive those who have written on your price tag.
- Release them from any obligation to make things right.
- Extend to them the same grace God has given you.
 - Ask God to take possession of the foothold in your soul that Satan has claimed.