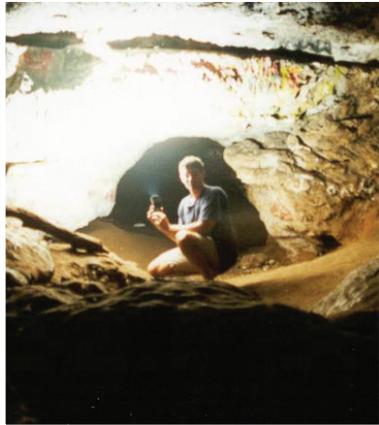


WARM UP

"It's not what you eat that kills you, it's what's eating you!"

A wife went to town one day and bought a pair of shoes. With that the husband got so angry that he just switched off and never spoke to his wife again for 15 long years. All efforts on her behalf to try and break the deadlock failed as her husband retreated into his cave of silence. The distraught wife remained faithful to him, serving him and being a good homemaker, but the husband still hardened his heart towards her. Eventually, the daughter-in-law pleaded in tears with her father-in-law to break the cruel plague of silence in the home. She held both of their hands and brought the couple together and the curse was broken. Bitterness had slowly eaten this man up and wasted 15 years of his life. True story. Do you know anyone with a similar story?



READ Matthew 6:14-15

QUESTIONS

1. Abraham Lincoln once said his heart was as great as the world, but there was no room in it to hold the memory of a wrong. Ask yourself - is there something eating me? Discuss it and get it into the open so that others can pray with you.

2. What do you think Matthew 5:23-26 is teaching about making things right? Discuss and apply to your own situation. Consider also the part of the Lord's Prayer that says, Lord forgive me in the same way I am prepared to forgive people who have sinned against me.

BACKGROUND

In the Scriptures there is a basic law of "binding and loosing". Forgiveness loosens; unforgiveness binds! When we release people who have sinned against us or offended us in a hurtful way, we are released. But when we refuse to forgive and harbour bitterness in our hearts, the same cord of unforgiveness that we bind the other person with, will also bind us.

3. What did Jesus say would happen to the person who would not forgive from his heart? Read Matthew 18:21-35 and discuss what it means to be tortured in prison!

2. Hebrews 12:14-15 has something to say about a root that goes down deep and begins to defile many people. What is it? Discuss and personalise.

7:20 IT'S TIME FOR PRAYER

MY RESPONSE AS A PROMISE KEEPER

In love, I will determine to release people who have hurt me.



CONSIDER THIS

Some people stubbornly cling to unforgiveness and refuse to make the first move. Note that Matthew 5:23-26 does not say, "if you have something against another", but says, "if you remember that someone has something against you". That puts the shoe on the other foot, and leaves the responsibility on your shoulders to be the initiator!



WRAP UP

Cremate the past, don't embalm it! Make up your mind to come out of "prison" and be set free by the Blood of the Lamb. Jesus came to set the prisoners free and to give beauty for ashes. Claim your inheritance by setting people free in forgiveness!