



# *Manasquan Writer's Ministry*

*Writing for the glory of God*

## A LESSON LEARNED

By Anne MacCormack

Summer was coming to a close, and the new school year was rapidly approaching for children. Since summer is my favorite time of the year, and I loved having my kids home to enjoy it together, I was somewhat saddened by these two events. One mother in the neighborhood always hung out the flag on the first day of school as an expression of her joy and freedom, but that was not me—and I'm sure it was not hers either, but she liked to joke about it. However, it was a time for big-time preparation that seemed endless—new shoes, various items of clothing, hair cuts, backpacks, school supplies.

Another thing that made me sad was the fact that my five-year old son, (my baby) was going to kindergarten, and his sister would be attending her last year in elementary school before going to middle school. The big day arrived, and they both were spruced up and ready to go. There is a picture burned into my memory of the two of them walking away from me with my little son holding on to his big sister's hand with a mixture of eagerness and fear on his face. I felt a tear glistening on my cheek and a bittersweet moment...happiness for them, for the good experiences they were about to encounter and yet melancholy for myself, as my little man was growing up and not always going to be under my watchful eye.

I could hardly wait for the kindergarten session to be over so that I could hear more about my son's experiences. As I stood on the sidewalk, the school door finally burst open, and out emerged masses of noisy and happy children searching for their mothers. I could hardly contain myself, but I waited patiently until we arrived home so that I could interrogate him in peace and quiet. I sat him down in a big comfortable chair and said, "Now you can tell me all about your day—was it lots of fun, what did you do, do you like your teacher?" I had plenty of questions, but he was quite reserved with his answers—"yes" "no" and "okay," and that he liked the teacher—that was about all I could pull out of him. He made it clear that he sought release from his torture to have lunch, so I had to finally let him go without all the information I was expecting. As he was getting up, he casually added, "Oh!, the teacher said I was the "best dresser." "Really, I replied; and filled with pride, that night I went to work picking out another great outfit, polishing his white buck shoes until they were gleaming, carefully pressing his outfit, and preparing everything needed to again turn out the

“best dresser” by the “best mother” of the kindergarten class. The next two days were like the first—the cross examination began with the same type of questions and always getting nothing much more than “teacher says I am the “best dresser.” And again each night I would work harder to make sure my little five-year-old debonair son kept his title.

The next day, however, when he made his declaration of being the best dresser, I thought I heard a little difference in his speech, and I asked him to repeat the phrase. When he repeated it, he said, “you know, we have to lay down on our mats and rest for a while every day, and I’m the “best rester.” I felt the smugness drain right out of me. The adding, subtracting, and redistribution of a few letters had changed everything; and facing the reality in that second of time forced me to come back down to earth: He was not the best dresser, nor was I the best mother. He was just a cute little boy like the rest of the boys in the class, and I was just like all the other mothers who love and care for their children.

Luke 22:24-26

*24 A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. 25 Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. 26 But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.*

While this story is not exactly an example of what Jesus is trying to convey in the scripture, I believe it illustrates how we can become enamored by our own importance. Jesus tells us that we are to be humble and that we are not to think that we are better or smarter than our brothers and sisters and that our purpose is to serve others regardless of who they are or where they are from.



Forgiveness Devotional  
By Dave Wilenta

Ephesians 4:31-“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

The trick to forgiveness is realizing that in letting go of bitterness and anger towards someone else, you are actually liberating yourself from a dark, lonely, self-imposed prison! The act of forgiving someone is often an even bigger blessing than being forgiven.

Forgiveness is like the tease of Spring, bringing light and warmth into a cold, dark Winter’s heart. No wonder our Heavenly Father instructs us to do so!

Application – As the new year kicks off, think of someone whom you hold a grudge against.....Now forgive them.....and believe God will take care of the rest.....It’s that simple...



## Recipe for Forgiveness

By Andrea Rodgers

**F**orget the injury

**O**ffer and accept an apology

**R**eveal your feelings

**G**et over "it" and move on

**I**nvigorate your relationship with Christ

**V**alidate each other's feelings

**E**liminate negativity and accentuate the positive

**N**ever forget the Lord's example

**E**mbrace the healing presence of Jesus

**S**cripture: *"I tell you, not seven times, but seven times seventy."* Matthew 18:24

**S**cripture: *"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."* Acts 10:43



## Seventy Times Seven

By Renee Bergin

The Lord says to forgive seventy times seven  
He says we will receive our rewards in heaven  
Sometimes hurt feelings are hard to forgive  
Yet we're Christians, and as Jesus we want to live  
Renew your strength in the Lord!  
Capture the confidence that only He can give!  
The Lord says to forgive seventy times seven



## Prejudice By Tim Thompson

Prejudice? Good Christians should give the benefit of the doubt first.

People are free to have opinions. Hopefully, they are based on actual observations rather than quick judgements though. Here is one of mine.

It was Spring of 1969 and things were quite different in America then. I was playing with a baseball, mitt, and pitch-back on my side yard when I saw my Mom speaking with our garbage man. He was a thin, “stringbean” type of man with baggy clothes, very friendly, and oh yeah, a black fellow - Mr. John DeLoatch.

He let my Mom know that they were organizing a baseball team through the town recreation and asked if I would like to play. He said he would pick me up and drop me off as needed, as my Mom did not drive (city girl). She said she would need to talk with my Father and would let him know.

I waited anxiously as my Mom asked what my Dad thought that night. “Well he sure works hard, find out what church he goes to?” was all my Dad said. An uncomfortable position for my Mom for sure but she found out and reported back, ha! All checked out and within a week I was a full-fledged player on the Spring Valley Gators.

Mr. DeLoatch would shake out an old army bag with two bats, four sack bases, and one batting helmet (we shared a lot more back then, ha!). He put me at second, even though I was a lefty, and would gradually hit sharper and harder ground balls until I missed. Then he would back off and repeat the proces to each position. It took awhile to get confident, and there was no sugar coating. You either made the play or you made an error, and it was silent either way. No cheering and no “nice try”. Just harder and harder ground balls, ha! Oh yeah, did I mention I was the only white kid on the team? At nine years old I really did not mind though, as this is where I wanted to be - on the baseball diamond.

James Wilkins, Elwood Price, Henry DeLoatch and I had a great summer - and oh yeah the Mets won the World Series that fall! We were truly unaware of what issues the world may have been having. To us life was just fine.

I am still a HUGE Mets fan to this day, and still hit harder and harder grounders to my sons and then back off, just like I was coached. You see, that Summer took me from my Mom’s apron strings to a much larger world, beyond just baseball, all because of one friendly garbage man who spoke up, and one understanding city girl who was willing to listen.



A Bad Day  
By Rob Petillo

Every so often, even the best of us fail in our mission to be the best Christians we can be. We sometimes forget ourselves and fail to live the way Jesus would have us live, and we hurt the people we love, including our own children. As parents, we are not perfect, and sometimes have moments that, in hind sight, we wonder what we could have been thinking at the time. Thank God that our children have short memories, and tend to forgive us very easily.

Last Sunday was a tough one. It started out well enough, having had the opportunity to play drums in the praise band, which I really enjoyed, but inside I was struggling to hold it together. I was stressed out, and could not seem to calm myself down. Needless to say, what started out as a beautiful day, would soon become one I wish I could forget.

My eight year old son Robert, who we affectionately refer to as Bert for short, plays goalie in the mite hockey league at Jersey Shore Arena. He has only been playing about six months, but he shows real promise. He does not skate very well yet, but he is very flexible and has great reflexes, which usually makes up for the lack of skating ability and experience.

Bert had two games on Sunday, one after the other, and in the first game, he was playing real well. He was in good position and made several outstanding saves. Having played goalie in a men's league for the past fifteen years, I often give him encouragement and advice between periods, and sometimes he even listens to me. ...Ok maybe not, but he pretends to, which is all I can hope for. That day, however, Bert just flat out ignored me, even at one point telling me that I was embarrassing him. I have coached youth hockey, and have sometimes cringed at the way some parents embarrass their kids because of the way they are playing, and I thought to myself, "There is no way that I am becoming one of 'them'."

The second game did not go so well ...

... Neither did the ride home.

What started out as a harmless conversation about things we need to work on, as if he wanted to hear it at that point, became one of the worst parenting moments of my life. I laid into my eight year old pretty hard, just like some of those psychotic sports parents that I had come to pity, and I soon realized that I HAD become one of 'them'. Bert was silent, and when I looked in the rear view mirror, I noticed that he was crying. My heart sank in the deafening silence. I made my little boy cry over a hockey game, and I didn't know what to say or do: I was heart broken. "What has happened to me?" was all I could think. I had let the stress of my busy life take hold of me, and in the process, hurt someone who I love more than life itself.

The rest of the day was spent trying to make it up to him, and later that evening, as we sat down to watch the Ranger's game together as we always do, he sat on the other end of the couch, which he never does. I looked over at him and told him that I was embarrassed of my behavior and I am sorry, and promised him that I would never do anything like that again. Bert looked up, made his way over to me, said "I forgive you daddy", and assumed his usual Ranger-watching position at my side, where he belongs. As we sat there, with my arm around him, I couldn't fight back the tears, knowing that we were Ok.

I would like to believe that I am a good role model for my children. Unfortunately I fail from time to time, as we all do. I would also like to believe that I do a pretty good job raising my children in the teachings of Christ. Apparently, this time the student became the teacher. I learned a lesson in forgiveness from my eight year old, who forgave me unconditionally. Children have a unique perspective when it comes to forgiveness. They have not yet learned to be filled with arrogance or pride, and forgive quite easily. That is why Jesus taught us to be like children. Scripture tells us that He said, *"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."* Matthew 18:3

As Christians, we believe that we are forgiven for our sins through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who died so that we may have life. However, we need to keep in mind that we also must forgive those who hurt us. ... *"But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins"*. Matthew 6:15

I hope when the time comes for me to forgive someone who has hurt me, I will do so with the same childlike ease that Bert forgave me; as Christ forgives us all.

...Believe it or not, Bert is still willing to get back on the ice for the next game. I think I'll sit way up in the bleachers this week.



## FORGIVING ALL THE WAY By Anne MacCormack

Have you ever done something or said something to someone, especially someone you love, that you regret? I have-- probably more times than I care to remember, but there is one time that has haunted me from the moment that my tongue committed the offense.

My mother was the most caring and nurturing person I have ever known—to me, she was the perfect mother—always there for me no matter what, and I loved her dearly. She came to live with my husband and me after my dad died, and I loved being able to serve her as she grew older and our roles became somewhat reversed. She loved good food, and I enjoyed making

some of her favorite meals like a grilled cheese, bacon, and tomato sandwich for lunch (it had to have tomato) or a pot roast dinner. Things went well for the first two years; and then when health issues began to take its toll on her, her normal pleasant disposition changed into a more demanding one and an attitude of ungratefulness for everything that was done for her and I said to her, “Mom, you never say ‘thank you’ any more for anything-- that’s not like you.” Her reply was that she didn’t feel it was necessary and that my husband and I overdid our thanks to each other for small favors. I began to feel resentment, and sometimes I would prepare her lunch and then sneak out on her for a few hours just to get away for a while by myself. I hated myself for doing that, and I asked God to help me to be more understanding and tolerant, but somehow I wasn’t being receptive to his response—more likely, that I didn’t want to be.

One day, Mom and I had some unpleasant moments over something—I don’t even recall what it was about, but she said something that angered me to the point that I shot back what was on the tip of my tongue, “You know, Mom, many of our friends have always said that you and I were very much alike in our ways, and I used to be proud of that; but now I know that they were wrong, and I am so glad that **I am not like you.**” I said this in a tone that was nasty; and the second after I said it, I was sorry, but it was too late. Once words come out of our mouths, it’s impossible to take them back. I had wounded her and I could see the hurt in her eyes--it was mean, and it accomplished my purpose which was to hurt her like she was hurting me.

God’s nature is one of endless forgiveness; but being sorry for something we did or said to someone, especially someone that we love, is different from true repentance, which is what God requires of us--a complete turn-around from the behavior that caused the sin. After cooling down, I confessed my sin to God, asked for forgiveness, and promised to guard my tongue and change my own unforgiving attitude towards my mother’s temperament. I also apologized to my mother, and I believe she forgave me then and there, just like her old self.

My mother went home to be with the Lord nearly nine years ago, and there have been many times when remembering that particular episode, deep feelings of regret would linger in my heart for hurting the one person in all the world that I should never offended. I knew that God had forgiven me, but I was still troubled because I could not forgive myself.

After studying many passages of Scripture about forgiveness in order to come to terms with this problem, I realized that by refusing to forgive myself when God had already forgiven me, I was actually undermining His power and my firm belief that Jesus paid the penalty of all our sins when he died for us on the cross. Dwelling on this past sin was hindering me from the contentment, the freedom, and the joy that comes from accepting His precious gift of grace.

*“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”* Psalm 103:12

*“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more”* Hebrews 8:12

**Once we are forgiven, God does not keep any record of our wrongdoing. Therefore, we must do the same!**



The Manasquan Writer's Ministry is a group of writers who are dedicated to writing for the Glory of God. Each member of our team may have their own unique style, and writing preference, whether it be short stories, poetry, devotionals, or essays, but we have one thing in common; our love for God.

Our mission is simply to bring the love and peace of Jesus Christ to our congregation, community, and the world through the written word. With our own words, combined with Scripture, we hope to inspire, comfort, and minister to those who may be poor in spirit, and lead them to a greater relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We hope you have enjoyed our newsletter. If you would like to join our group or submit your writing for future issues, please e-mail Dave Wilenta @ [dwilenta@fpc.com](mailto:dwilenta@fpc.com) or Rob Petillo @ [rpetillo27@aol.com](mailto:rpetillo27@aol.com)