

# NORTHERN LIGHT

*Digest*

Grace Communion International Canada / Communion Internationale dans la Grâce, Canada SEPT. 2015

## **How Can I Do It — It Isn't In Me**

***The movie *The Passion of the Christ* came out over a decade ago. It was controversial in some ways, but was viewed by many millions. In fact, it took in over \$600 million in revenue, and was the highest grossing religious movie ever made.***

The movie *The Passion of the Christ* came out over a decade ago. It was controversial in some ways, but was viewed by many millions. In fact, it took in over \$600 million in revenue, and was the highest grossing religious movie ever made. The depiction of the violence involved in crucifixion was graphic, and it isn't a film everyone would wish to see. However, it did depict in no uncertain terms the suffering Jesus Christ experienced during the last day of his life.

Beyond recording the events of Jesus' life and subsequent death, the Bible tells us who he was, why he came to the

earth, and what he accomplished during that 33 ½ year time period. The clear claim of scripture is that he was God, he became human, and then laid down his life as a willing sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. He, though the only truly innocent human being who has ever lived, suffered on behalf of us all. The "just" died for the "unjust."

When we think of the evils human beings have wrought on one another, we recognize that a great deal of pain has been inflicted, and a tremendous amount of hurt has been experienced. How can we handle this pain? Sometimes it is thrown back on the perpetrators in the form of revenge seeking. Lashing out in retaliation is a common response, but generally only leads to a return wave of "pay back." In many parts of the world, populations find themselves caught in a seeming endless cycle of violence, one side seeking vengeance for past wrongs which only seems to elicit the same response back.

Another possible response is to hold the pain and anger inside oneself. This can sometimes happen when there is a power difference great enough to prevent any hope of successful retaliation. However, this can corrode human beings at the core of their character. The hatred ferments into an acidic brew that corrodes the soul—enslaving one to hatred and bitterness.



As Christians, we have a better option. Rather than lashing out in vengeance, or hold the pain and anger inside our hearts, we can give it to Jesus. He, though innocent, entered into our human existence and took the pain and suffering of humankind upon himself (2 Corinthians 5:21). His body was broken, and his blood spilt absorbing the anguish of humanity. Through his suffering and death, he made a way for us to find liberty—to be freed from the hurt, pain and anger that we all experience to one degree or another living out our human lives.

When we are one with him—Christ in us, and we in him—we can experience true freedom. In him, and through the work of the Spirit in our lives, we are able to release the anger that comes from being hurt by others. We can lay it at the feet of Jesus, who is able to

***As Christians, we have a better option. Rather than lashing out in vengeance, or hold the pain and anger inside our hearts, we can give it to Jesus. He, though innocent, entered into our human existence and took the pain and suffering of humankind upon himself (2 Corinthians 5:21).***

absorb it into the suffering he experienced on our behalf, and we can find peace. In that peace—in that recognition that Jesus has taken the pain and suffering—we are able to forgive those who have wronged us.

As we recognize our own weakness and brokenness, we come to even more deeply appreciate that the grace of God has been freely poured out on us, enabling us to extend the overflow of that grace to those who have hurt us too.

Some hurts are very deep. Indeed, extending forgiveness takes more than what we find within ourselves. The good news is that Jesus Christ is more than able to absorb the pain, the guilt, the shame and the anguish and grant us peace. Peace inside our own hearts and peace in our relationships with others. It has already been accomplished by his finished work on the cross on our behalf. In him we find peace—and in him we find the capacity to do what we cannot do on our own resources—to extend forgiveness to others, even when the hurt runs deep. Through him we are reconciled both to God and to one another—through him we find spiritual healing.

## **Gary Moore**

### ***The Power Of Apology***

***Consider this. The police chief of a major city, a leader in community reconciliation, recently confessed to a colleague and me a severe lapse in judgment. He had sat down at a restaurant where the waiter serving him was Turkish. Suddenly, deeply buried resentments inside the chief's psyche rose to the surface. He proceeded to make life miserable for the young waiter.***

Consider this. The police chief of a major city, a leader in community reconciliation, recently confessed to a colleague and me a severe lapse in judgment. He had sat down at a restaurant where the waiter serving him was Turkish. Suddenly, deeply buried resentments inside the chief's psyche rose to the surface. He proceeded to make life miserable for the young waiter.

Why?

The chief was of Armenian descent. Inside him were deep feelings he had heard around the family table concerning the Armenian genocide of 1905, one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most despicable crimes. "The Turks have never apologized for that episode," the chief told us. "Still, it was no excuse for my behavior toward that young man."

Events 100 years old came hurtling out of the past as if they were fist-fights from yesterday.

#### **"Land of the Living Past"**

Remember "ethnic cleansing?"

In the 1990s, millions of people in the Balkans found themselves caught up in hatreds and resentments that went back to squabbles and atrocities of the 1300s. One journalist called this area, "the land of the living past."

In the face of such deeply rooted hatreds can a simple apology be of much help?

Counsellors and ministers get such questions often. One e-mail to us expressed it this way:

"Why should I apologize to the descendants of slaves, or the holocaust, or the Northern Irish? I didn't do it. It happened before I was born. How can apologizing for things you didn't do help anything? Is it biblical? Can you back it up? Aren't you just stirring up trouble?"

These are logical questions. They deserve an answer.



### “Archaeology of Revenge”

The example of the Balkans and the Armenian genocide should remind us that, in writer William Faulkner’s words, “the past isn’t over, it isn’t even past.” Ancient hatreds and animosities still exist. There is what one Israeli writer called “an archaeology of revenge” that people carry around inside them. The trouble is already out there walking around. The dead hand of the past is not so dead. People still living carry around bitter folk memories of wrongs inflicted on their ancestors, wounds that have been passed on down.

A phrase from Exodus 20:5 comes to mind: “the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”

Hatreds take on a life of their own—the Capulets and the Montagues in “Romeo and Juliet;” the Martins and the McCoys in early America, the pain felt by victims of abuse from religious schools across Canada. In Bosnia the hurt went marching down the generations. Faced with such realities it is only logical to ask another question: who is responsible for trying to break such cycles of hatred? The dead? Obviously not. Who, then, will step into the breach, and how?

“Attitudes have a kind of inertia,” wrote M. Scott Peck, “Once set in motion they will keep going, even in the face of the evidence. To change an attitude requires a considerable amount of work and suffering.”

“Work and suffering.” That’s the hard part. So where to begin?

### Sins of the Fathers?

Many counsellors believe that an indispensable first step in shutting down any cycle of hatred is to work toward an apology. “What—a simple apology?” Wait. No apology is simple. That’s why it has to be “worked towards.” This is a process. It requires emo-

tional and spiritual commitment on the part of the one offering it and....for the injured party to accept it. Which is to say that neither a merciful nor an apologetic approach is easy to implement? On anyone’s part.

Jesus alluded to this in 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.”

Consider this: Only humble people—the truly meek—can offer a sincere apology.

Attitudes unchecked go from bad to worse. They harden into obsessions. It’s the stuff of our nightly news—teens against parents, landlords and tenants, employee against employer, gender against gender, race against race. On the national scene seething resentments often show up as crusades, vendettas, pogroms, and purges—the ugly lexicon of hate.

But what about things that happened generations ago? Can a living generation be held account-

## NORTHERN LIGHT *Digest*

Vol.4, No. 3 Sept. 2015

Gary Moore

**Editorial Advisor**

Bill Hall

**Managing Editor**

**Layout and Design**

Colin Wallace

**Online Edition Editor**

Northern Light Digest is published 4 times annually for members of the Grace Communion International Canada. Editorial contributions and comments on any issue raised in Northern Light Digest are welcome although unsolicited materials may not be returned. Please address all correspondence to:

**The Editor,  
Northern Light Digest  
101 - 5668 192 Street,  
Surrey, BC V3S 2V7**

or email us at:  
[northernlight@gcicanada.ca](mailto:northernlight@gcicanada.ca)

The new online edition of Northern Light Digest is available at [www.gcicanada.ca](http://www.gcicanada.ca)

Unless noted otherwise, scriptures are quoted from the Holy Bible, New International Version, © Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. Photos: © Designpics.com

Send all address changes to:  
Northern Light Digest  
101 - 5668 192 St.  
Surrey, BC V3S 2V7  
email:  
[northernlight@gcicanada.ca](mailto:northernlight@gcicanada.ca)



---

***Offenses are personal. To deal with them often takes a personal response. Even on the family, parental level we can see the power of an apology. When a father or mother or minister sincerely apologizes to a young person for overreacting too harshly, immense good will is created. It begins to melt the frozen crippled relationship where everyone stumbles around in a half-evasive daze, not sure of what to do next.***

able for what their ancestors did? Apparently so. 2 Samuel 21 records a severe famine in Israel in the time of King David. David sought God's advice. He was told: "It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death." Centuries before, the Gibeonites had been promised protection as resident aliens in Israel (Joshua 9:15). Saul had broken that pledge. Now David's generation was paying the price. "David asked the Gibeonites, 'What shall I do for you? How shall I make amends?'"

A gruesome penalty was exacted until mercy finally triumphed.

Later, the prophet Daniel, living in a different era than ours, discovered God's intention to remove a curse imposed some seventy years before. That moved Daniel to prayerful intercession, to fresh confession and repentance for the sins of his fathers' generation (Daniel 9:16).

And what of our ultimate example, Jesus? Wasn't he put to death for a process of sin that began with Adam and Eve, as well as personal sin (Romans 5:17-19).

Offenses are personal. To deal with them often takes a personal response. Even on the family, parental level we can see the power of an apology. When a father or mother or minister sincerely apologizes to a young person for overreacting too harshly, immense good will is created. It begins to melt the frozen crippled relationship where everyone stumbles around in a half-evasive daze, not sure of what to do next.

### **Breaking the Cycle**

Eveleyne O'Callahan Burkhard, a GCI member in Southern Ireland, and a reconciliation specialist with experience in Rwanda, reports, "the first step towards peace is to talk truthfully about what went wrong." This takes courage. A sincere intercessory apology often clears the air. It can be as simple and objective as saying, "Look, at least believe me when I say I'm sorry we're having this problem." Where the archaeology of wrongdoing is deeply layered it takes courage to break down barriers. Eveleyne also worked in Cambodia after Pol Pot's terror. "There are many examples in his-

tory of nations who have tried to bury rather than face the past," she told us. "If we try to ignore or bury the past it will haunt us and may even destroy us."

Forgiveness is a gift. It is an act of release. It can be graciously extended after a generous apology is offered. But when there is a refusal to admit that *someone somewhere did something very, very wrong* relationships remain frozen in a spiritual ice age. Human nature being what it is, the next step is often to blame the victims for inflating the situation. "You're making it up. It's not that bad."

And so, the cycle continues. The bitterness remains. Everyone loses.

But the good news is that there is a better way. It often begins with a heartfelt, godly apology. Jesus put it starkly and simply: "Settle matters quickly with your adversary...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" (Matthew 5:23-25).

That's state-of-the-art advice for all of us.

***Neil Earle and Curtis May***