

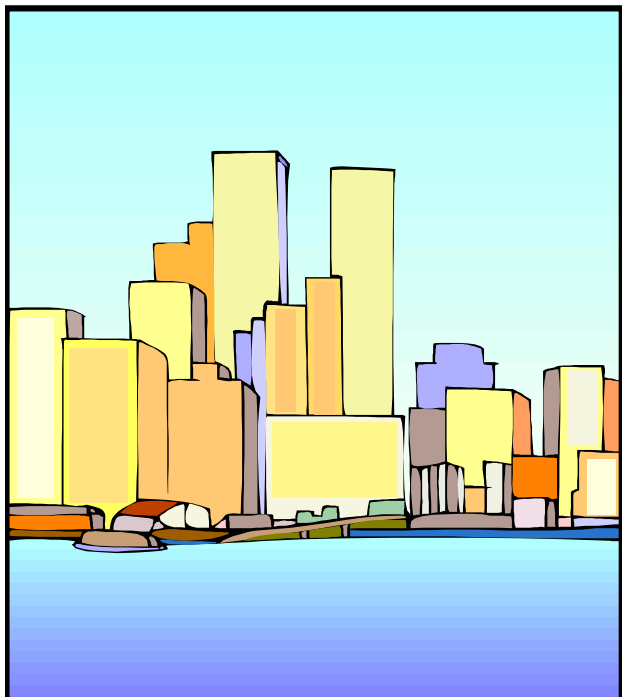


## Forgiveness

**H**e watched in horror at the TV. What was happening? It couldn't be happening! A plane crashed into the building his mother works in. Then suddenly, out of nowhere the building collapsed.

**“NO!” he screamed. “Mom works in that building. I’ve got to call dad. He’ll know what to do.”** Quickly he ran to the telephone and dialed his dad’s office. The secretary picked up. “I’m sorry Paul but your dad isn’t here. He went to the World Trade Center looking for your mother.”

**“This can’t be happening,” he thought. “What if dad got stuck under the collapsing buildings?”** He didn’t know





what to do. Then he remembered his mother telling him that whenever he was in need and couldn't find her, he should pray.

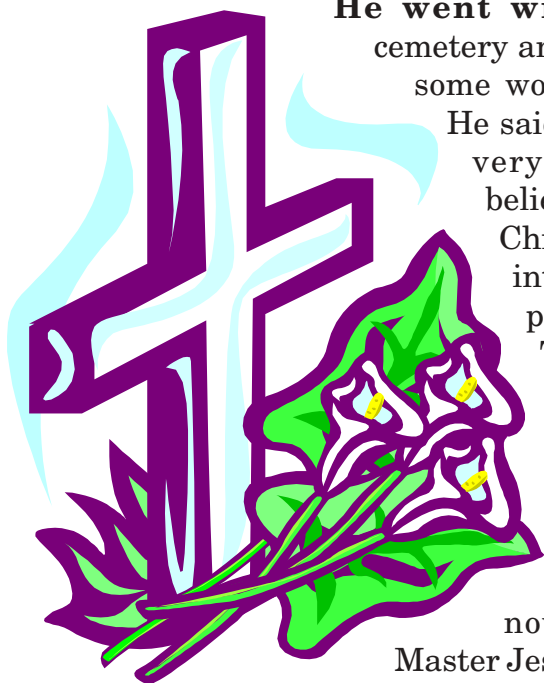
**He then went into his room and got down on his knees.** "Lord Jesus," he prayed, "A terrible thing just happened and I'm afraid my parents may have gotten hurt. Please, Lord Jesus, protect my parents."

**He didn't know what else to say. For a very long time** he kept praying, "Lord Jesus, please protect my parents. Please protect my parents."

**Then the door bell rang. He went to answer it. His** Aunt Nancy, his mother's sister, was there with tears in her eyes. They hugged for a long while and then waited for his dad to call or for the police to call. All day they waited, watching the news to see if there were any survivors.

**Finally his dad called. He had been searching for his** mother but was not able to find her. For many days Paul, his dad and aunt hoped and prayed that his mom would be alive. Then one day they got a call. The search crew found his mom but she had died.

**On the day of his mother's funeral, Paul dressed in** his new dark blue suit and stood next to his father as the funeral. Prayers were being prayed. There was a large picture of his mother in front of the altar with red and white roses around the picture. The priest and deacons prayed in a sad tone and there were many people at the service because there were so many people who knew and loved his mother.



**He went with his dad to the cemetery and there the priest said some words about his mother.**

He said, "Linda was indeed a very special person. She believed in our Lord Jesus Christ and made her home into a small church by her prayers and her fasting.

The Holy Bible was alive in her and she spent her days living the true Christian life.

That is why we don't mourn for her but rejoice because she is now with her Lord and

Master Jesus Christ. She will live eternally with Him and will always be praying for us."

**On the trip home Paul could think of nothing except** the fact that he would never see his mother again. She died at the hands of horrible men who kill innocent people and hurt so many others all in the name of God.

**This confused Paul. The God that he knew about, his** Father in Heaven, hated to see sin and pain. How could anyone think that God the Father would want his mother dead?

**Soon he was home and there were many** people there to give sympathy for the loss of his mother. After a while he went upstairs to his



room to get away from all the people downstairs.

**He turned on the radio but he really didn't listen to the music.** He tried to watch TV but remembered what he had seen on the news when his mother died and decided he never wanted to watch TV again.

**He tried to read a Holy Book but nothing kept him interested.** Finally he saw the Holy Bible that his mother used to read to him from. He opened the Holy Bible and read, *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; that you may be sons of your Father in Heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."* (Matt5:43-48)

**Paul became angry at what he read. He said to the empty room,** "How can I love my enemies? Right now I hate every Muslim in the world. I can't be perfect. I have anger inside of me and I hate those people for what they did to mom."

**Just then his Aunt Nancy passed by his room. She** heard him and went to see what was going on. Paul had his head on his pillow, crying great sobs from deep within his heart. His aunt placed her hand on his shoulder. He looked at her with great big tears in his eyes. "Why did they do that?" he asked.



“Why would God ask that they kill mom and so many other people?”

**His aunt Nancy took a deep breath and tried to** answer his questions. “Those men who did this do not know who God really is. In their minds they believe that God is vengeful and that they are pleasing God when they kill those who do not believe in Him the way they do.”

**“Our God in Heaven is a wonderful, kind and merciful** God who loves everyone. This is what those men do not understand. But we, who know the true God and believe on His Son, must not return their hate with hate.”

**“If we hate them, then we are no better than they. I** know that it’s hard for you to understand right now. You lost your mother and I lost a sister that I loved very, very much. But for God’s sake and her sake, I will not hate those men, or any other Muslim.

**“Your mom believed that we ought to be like our** Father in Heaven. She believed we ought to love everyone, even those who hurt us. I’m not asking you to love them right now, but don’t hate them. And please don’t hate all Muslim because of what some did.

**“One day you will even be able to forgive them. That** is what your mother would have wanted.”

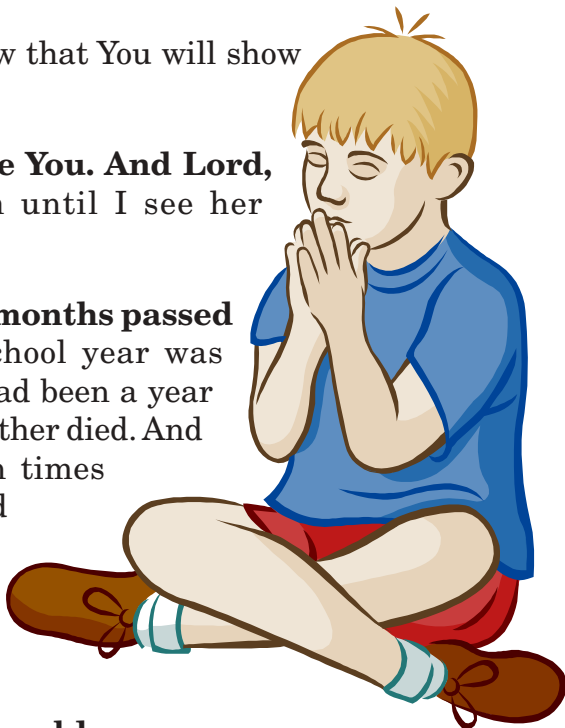
**Then she got up and left the room. Paul reread** the Holy Bible scripture and prayed, “Dear Lord Jesus, I don’t know if I can forgive my enemies. I don’t know how I could love men who hate us



so much. But I know that You will show me how.

**Help me to be like You. And Lord, take care of mom until I see her again.”**

**The days and the months passed** and soon a new school year was about to begin. It had been a year since the day his mother died. And while he was often times sad and he missed her very, very much, he was able to laugh again with his dad.



**Sometimes he would**

remember something his mom told him and he would smile. Sometimes, when he really needed her, he could feel her spirit next to him, encouraging him on. Always, when he felt her spirit next to him, he felt a great sense of love.

**On the first day of school, Paul went in and took his usual seat.** Mr. Johnson came in with a new student. He introduced the new student to the class, “Everyone, this is a new student, Sameh Hamdi. He will be joining us and I want everyone to make him welcome.”

**There was silence in the class. Everyone was looking at the new kid and remembering what happened the year before. Of everyone in the**



class, only Paul lost a parent. The kids then looked to Paul. What was Paul thinking, they wondered? How will he react to the new Muslim student?

**Paul looked at the new boy and remembered the horrible days of a year ago.** The new boy brought all the old, hurtful memories back to Paul. He began to feel angry again and his first instinct was to lash out at the new student the first chance he gets.

**Then through this haze of anger a sweet voice came to him.** He heard his mother's voice saying, 'Love your enemies, and be good to those who hurt you that you may be the son of your heavenly Father.'

**A tear rolled down his face as he remembered the kind ways of his mother.** He resolved then that he would not hate this new student. However, he was not going to be his friend.

**The day went on and Paul kept his distance from Sameh.** The rest of the students in the class did what Paul did and stayed away from the new kid. No one played with him. No one helped him with school work. No one even talked to him.

**This lasted for a couple of months until one day a fight broke out.** While they were out in the playground, three boys surrounded Sameh and began to accuse him of murder.

**"Your kind is not welcomed here. Go back from where you came from,"** yelled one boy.



**“That’s right. Who do you think you are anyway? You come to our country and eat our food and use our money for your pleasures and then you kill us. Go back to the land that taught you how to kill,”** said the next boy.

**Sameh was scared and said, “I didn’t kill anyone. No one in my family killed anyone. Please leave me alone.”**

**But the boys wouldn’t and they tightened in around him. They began to shout and soon a crowd gathered around them.**

**Paul heard the yelling and joined the crowd. He heard Sameh repeating, “I didn’t kill anyone. I didn’t kill anyone.”**

**Then someone said, “You should die, just like those who died in the World Trade Center.”**

**Up to this point Paul was only listening to what was happening. But when he heard that they were getting very angry, he shoved himself in front of the crowd and came between Sameh and the rest of the boys.**

**“Stop!” he said. “What are you doing? How could you be so ignorant and hateful?”**

**Everyone became silent. They didn’t understand. Of all the students that should be angry at Sameh, Paul was the one who should be angriest. But Paul was angry at them and not the new student.**





**“What’s wrong with you?” yelled one boy. “You should be the one who wants revenge against Muslims. They killed your mother.”**

**“Yes they did,” replied Paul. “But I don’t want revenge. I’m not going to be like them and hate those who are different than me. I am a child of God in Heaven and I will not hate.”**

**“For a whole year I hated those men who killed my mother. But my Lord Jesus showed me that in hating others I hurt only myself. My mother taught me to love others. Even though it’s hard, that is what I’m going to do.”**

**“You’re crazy!” shouted one boy who was really angry. “If someone killed my mother he’d be dead right now.”**

**“Those that killed my mother are dead,” replied Paul. “They died when the plane crashed. Justice has already been served to those men. What you want to do is kill and hate all Muslims. That’s just plain wrong.**

**“Sameh did nothing to me or my mother. He’s just a student here in school. If you hurt him, then you are no better than those who hate us just because of who we are.”**

**“I don’t understand,” said one girl. “How could you defend them after what they did?”**

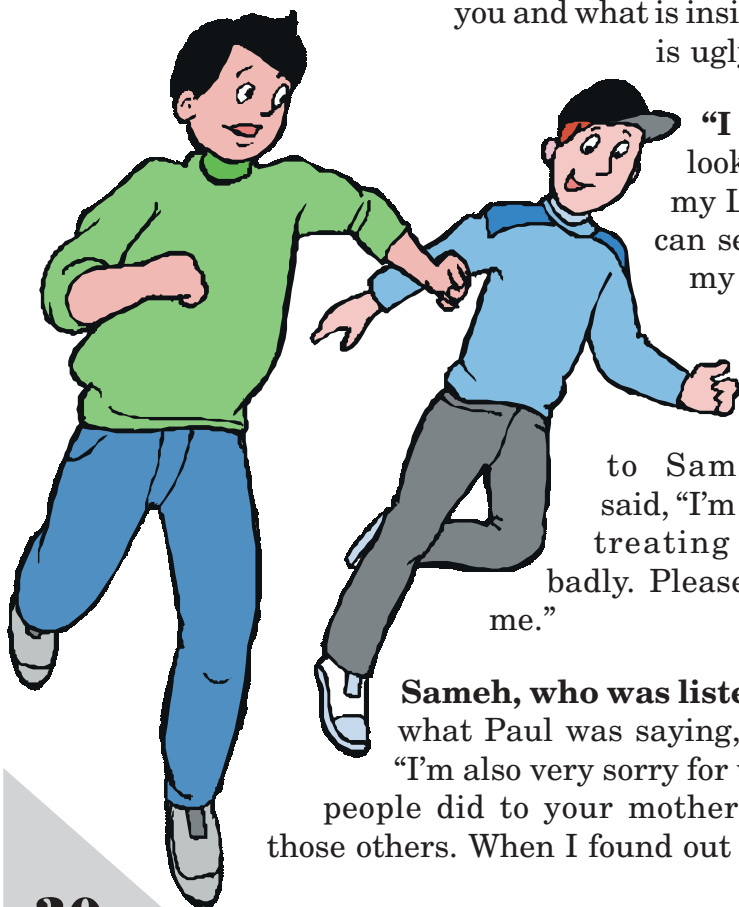
**“For a long time I was like you. I couldn’t understand why my Lord Jesus asked that we forgive and pray for those who hurt us. So, just like all of you I didn’t speak to Sameh or offer him my help or friendship.**



**“I thought I could ignore him but now I can’t because all of you hate him so much.**

**It took me a whole year to learn not to hate. During this year my Lord Jesus placed in me His peace and love.**

**“Yet in all this year I had not learned to forgive. Now, because of you, I can forgive. You should see your faces, all so full of anger and hate. Your faces reflect what is inside of you and what is inside of you is ugly.”**



**“I will not look ugly to my Lord who can see inside my heart.”**

**Then Paul turned to Sameh and said, “I’m sorry for treating you so badly. Please forgive me.”**

**Sameh, who was listening to what Paul was saying, replied, “I’m also very sorry for what my people did to your mother and all those others. When I found out how you**



lost your mother I wanted to come and say how sorry I was but no one would give me a chance.

**“Thank you for giving me this chance now.”** Then to everyone around him he said, “I will tell you this. My family and my friends are not violent and I hated what those others did to so many innocent people.”

**Turning to Paul he said, “I don’t know how you could forgive and learn to love people who hated you. Maybe one day you can tell me about your God who showed you how to turn hatred and hurt into love and peace.”**

**Then some teachers came and broke up the crowd.** Amazingly, Paul and Sameh walked back together.

**Paul talked to Sameh about his dear Savior Jesus Christ** and with time Sameh became a Christian and changed his name to John. He wanted to be called John because, like St John the Beloved, he felt our Lord Jesus Christ’s love in his life and it changed him.

**Later in his life Paul remembered how such a bad thing as the terrorist attack in New York City yielded so many graces** because he listened to the Word of God and his mother’s teachings.

