

Bedford Street Church of Christ

“When Will You Bury The Hatchet?”

Text: Matthew 18:21-35



- When?
- What is a hatchet?
 - Ax
 - Survival
 - Weapon

Bury the hatchet'?

What's the origin of the phrase

The figurative expression 'burying the hatchet' is different in that it did originate as an American Indian tradition. Hatchets were buried by the chiefs of tribes when they came to a peace agreement.

The phrase is recorded from the 17th century in English but the practice it refers to is much earlier, possibly pre-dating the European settlement of America. A translation of Thwaites' monumental work *Jesuit Relations*, 1644, suggests the practice:

"Proclaim that they wish to unite all the nations of the earth and to hurl the hatchet so far into the depths of the earth that it shall never again be seen in the future."

Bury the hatchet'?

The *New England Historical & Genealogical Register* for 1870 has a record that Samuel Sewall made in 1680, where he recounts the burying of hatchets by Native American tribes:

“Meeting wth ye Sachem [the tribal leaders] the[y] came to an agreemt and buried two Axes in ye Ground; which ceremony to them is more significant & binding than all Articles of Peace the Hatchet being a principal weapon wth ym.”

- Another American tradition came out of this practice, “shaking hands.”
- “The right hand was the ‘hatchet hand,’ so if the right hand was extended toward another person with an open gesture, that symbolized there was no hatchet present – the hatchet was buried.”
- Basically, an empty or open right hand was a symbol of forgetting and forgiving—the person had buried the hatchet.
- Although burying the hatchet is an old Indian tradition, it is a principle that is found throughout the Bible.

- Forgiving someone is easily taught but is much more difficult to practice.
- There are usually **two types of offences**, one is when we are wounded, the other when we are wronged.
- Being “wounded” is accidental. It happens all the time. Someone makes a comment or does something, and unintentionally offends someone.
- When a person is “wronged” it is intentional, and harm and pain was intended. Either way it hurts and God calls us to forgive.

Four Greek Words for Forgiveness

- The word “**aphiemi**” means “to send forth, send away, to remit or forgive debts and sins”.
- “**charizomai**” means in the context of Colossians 2:13 “give – equaling remit, forgive, pardon”
- “**Apoluo**” means “set free, release, pardon a prisoner...release a debtor”. This word is used in Luke 6:37: “...***Forgive, and you will be forgiven.***”
- The word “**aphesis**” means “pardon, cancellation of a...punishment or guilt, forgiveness of sins.”

“For if ye **forgive** men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also **forgive** you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father *forgive* your trespasses.

(Matt.6:14-15)

Aphemi: apo, “away from” hiemi, “send” – properly, send away, release (discharge)

This is a strong statement!

When we choose not to forgive, a couple of things happen.

- First the Bible uses the phrase “a root of bitterness” (**anger and disappointment at being treated unfairly, resentment**) to describe what happens in the heart when we harbor resentment
- The second thing that happens according to a story that Jesus told is that when we refuse to forgive someone **we are not harming them but we are putting ourselves in a self-made prison. (Matt. 18:21-35)**

CONCLUSION:

- The bottom line is we must **learn** how to bury the hatchet.
- The problem is we often bury it but leave the handle sticking out of the ground just in case we want to grab it up again.
- In the Indian tradition it states that they buried it so deep that an underground river miraculously washed the hatchets away.

CONCLUSION:

- Jesus not only taught us to forgive, He demonstrated it under the most extreme circumstances.
 - At the last supper, Jesus knowing that Judas had betrayed him still washed his feet as he did all the other disciples.
 - To take it a step farther, while on the cross Jesus looked at those who had abused him and rejected them and cried out to his heavenly father, praying, “Father forgive them.”
 - It is time to bury the hatchet for you are never more like Christ than when you forgive someone.