



# THE INSIDE RUNNING

Forgiveness is not something we do for others, we do it for ourselves so that we can get well and move forward. Not forgiving someone is allowing a person you don't like to live rent-free in your head!

These are two powerful quotes I read recently. Repentance and forgiveness are incredibly important keys to experiencing the love of God and being able to express love to others. It's a choice between wholeness, wellness and blessing – and bitterness, illness and loneliness. Yet people curse themselves when they say, "I could never forgive that person".

Jesus said, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:23) It seems to me that when you are offended, unless you forgive the person, then you are the one who retains the hurt. It is a wise idea to keep short accounts. Go and see a person who has offended you and try to sort it out. Forgive them. Don't let the sun go down on your wrath (Eph 4:26) is a good standard to aim for, especially with those people closest to you.

May you know His peace every day.

John Subritzky



*John*

## Freedom Through Forgiveness

### "Ifoga" – Seeking Forgiveness

by Tavale Matai'a

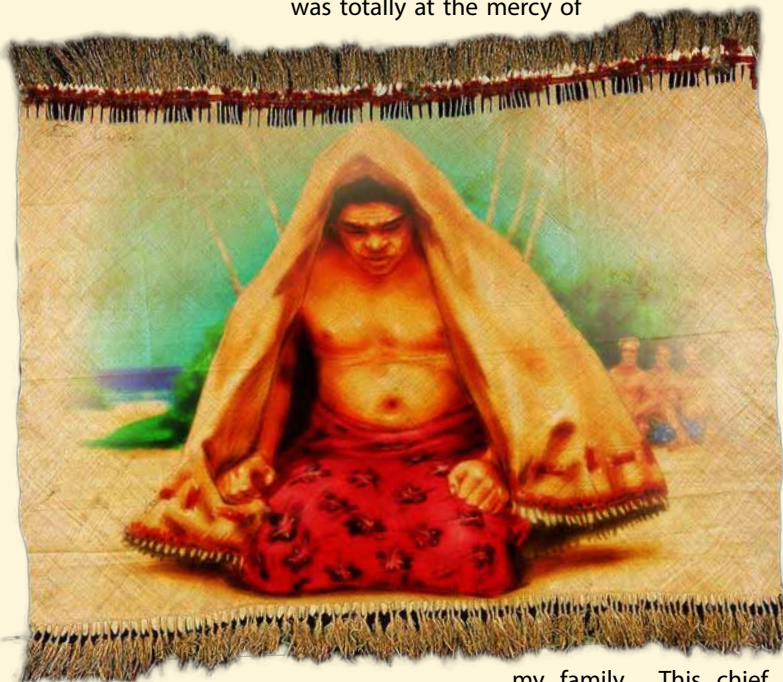
In early 2003 my older brother, Matai'a Pili, passed away in Samoa. He was a paramount chief in our village, Sato'alepai. My younger brother, Tom, and I decided to travel to Samoa for the funeral.

While the funeral service was in progress in the church, a pickup truck loaded with people, food and *ie-toga* (fine mats – the most valuable artefact in the Samoan culture), pulled up in front of our *fale*. In the truck were three *matai* (Samoan chiefs/orators) from the village of Sataua, three elderly women and three beautiful young girls. One of the women was the estranged wife of my deceased brother, and the three girls were my nieces.

Understandably, the estranged wife and especially the daughters wanted to express their last farewell to my brother. But there was a huge problem. The wife had committed adultery two years previously and she had left my brother secretly, taking with her the three daughters. Therefore, under no circumstances should she be setting foot again in our village, because she had shamed my brother and my family. Traditionally, her only hope of being accepted again by my family was through the Samoan cultural practice called *ifoga*. But even that is no guarantee of any reconciliation between her and my family.

There was a commotion among the young men of our family behind the main meeting *fale* where the chiefs were sitting cross-legged on the hard concrete floor. The young men were ready to attack the loaded truck in revenge. Fortunately the chiefs intervened and told them to be patient and wait for their command.

Meanwhile the visiting family proceeded with their *ifoga*. They chose their most paramount *matai* to be covered by a huge *ie-toga* as he was kneeling on the sand about ten metres in front of the meeting house. The sun was beating down at noonday. The outside temperature was about 31°C, so underneath the fine mat it was extremely hot. He could not see anything from his position and he was totally at the mercy of



my family. This chief could have been the father of the guilty woman and he was practically offering himself up as a sacrifice on behalf of his daughter, seeking forgiveness from my family. While he was shaking with fear underneath the *ie-toga*, the chiefs of my family were deciding his fate - either to let him live or ➤

> kill him in order for any reconciliation to happen. Alternatively, my family could reject their *ifoga* and still let the man live.

The whole atmosphere, both inside the *fale* and outside, was extremely tense. After a heated debate among my family *matai* one of them stood up and approached the offering outside. The young men followed closely behind him waiting for his command. Suddenly the chief dropped to his knees, pulled off the *ie-toga* and embraced the shivering man. Mercy and grace had prevailed. Pardon and forgiveness were granted. He was then led inside the *fale* arm-in-arm and his whole party were invited into the *fale*. There were tears of joy and embraces all round. Speeches were exchanged. Fine mats, money and food were presented to our family. It was a day of an amazing paradox – rejoicing for the reconciliation, and yet grieving at the passing away of my brother.

### This is Why Jesus Christ Came

The *ifoga* in a sense nicely demonstrated for me the very essence of why Jesus Christ came into the world – to reconcile humanity to the Father. From my perspective **2 Corinthians 5:11-21** is the key scripture that helps to remind me why God called me into partnership with Him to proclaim and to demonstrate biblical reconciliation.

### The Message of Reconciliation

Christ came to give His life for us so that we can be reconciled to the Father and have peace with Him. Verse 21: *“For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”* That is, Christ identified with humanity and took upon Himself our sin (like the

father who offered himself on behalf of his guilty daughter). Hence believers can be embraced by God’s reconciliation making them the ‘righteousness of God’! In actuality, Christ becomes our righteousness – when we come to God in humility and repentance! This is our message.

### The Ministry of Reconciliation

Verse 11: *“Therefore, knowing the fear of God, we try to persuade others...”* The mission statement of our church is simply, “To know Christ and to make Him known”. In fact verse 20 says: *“...He has given us the ministry of reconciliation”*. In other words we are His ambassadors. What a privilege!

### The Miracle of a New Creation

Verse 17 is just incredible: Being in Christ is the start of a *new creation*, the cosmic reversal of the original fall; the *old way* of looking from a human point of view has passed away and no longer has any validity. This reconciliation has nullified every racial prejudice, destroyed every cultural divide, and dismantled all man-made barriers. The ‘new creature’ in Christ is now set free to serve humanity and be a blessing to all of God’s creation.

### Motivated by Love

Verses 14-15: *“For the love of Christ urges us on because we are convinced that one has died for all.”* We owe all to Christ and to emulate His compassion for others is the true test of our love for God. It was not the rusty nails that held Jesus firmly on the cross – it was His amazing love for us.



**1 John 3:16** sums it up magnificently for us: *“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”*

*Tavale has been a Board member and speaker for Promise Keepers for many years. As a respected elder in the Samoan community, it has been on his heart to make a PK Event accessible to Samoan speaking men.*



**Tama Tane Malosi**  
Mighty Men of Valour

## Auckland – 27-28 July

Promise Keepers launches its first ever Samoan Language Men’s Event to inspire Samoan men to live as mighty men of valour – “Tama Tane Malosi”.  
More info and video: [www.promisekeepers.org.nz](http://www.promisekeepers.org.nz)

PROMISE

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A Promise Keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.



## PK Men’s Events 2012 - Book Early!

- ◆ Christchurch 24-25 Aug 2012
- ◆ Wellington 14-15 Sep 2012
- ◆ Auckland 5-6 Oct 2012

0800 PROMISE (77 66 47)



# Bitterness in the Garden of Our Hearts

by Francis Frangipane



It is impossible to pass through this world without being struck by injustice or heartache. Unless we process our struggles in Christ, a single wounding of our soul can create a deep bitterness within us, poisoning our very existence...

Consider Naomi from the book of Ruth. A famine in Israel led Naomi’s family to migrate to Moab. Without family or friends to support her, as aliens in a foreign land, Naomi then suffered the loss of her husband; his death was followed by the death of her two grown sons. When Naomi returned to Israel with Ruth, her daughter-in-law, she announced to those who knew her, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara [bitter], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me” (Ruth 1:20).

For full article, see next month’s *WiseChoices* DVD ROM.

Pastors register for...



*“... So that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Acts 3:19*

Geoff Wiklund has a heart to see the wounded healed and to spark encouragement in pastors. This will be a time to grow together and come to a great place in God.

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