



Ruth, an ordained minister, works full time with the elderly. She is on the ethics, pastoral, and diversity committees with the health system she works with. She is also an adjunct professor at Bethel College in Hampton, Va. Her husband is pastor to the Spanish congregation at Williamsburg Assembly of God and works part-time. They have one adult son who plays piano at a local church.

Keep A Forgiving Heart

Ruth Pabon

Walking down the hall in my college dorm, I heard a student yelled from her room, “Taco Girl, come here.” I knew she impugned my race, but I stopped and she continued with more insults. I walked away, knowing my Christian faith would be tested. Hearing the voice of my mother and my pastor saying, “choose to forgive,” on my knees, I decided to forgive.

Later on in seminary, the test came in classrooms with 80 men and only a handful of women. Some men didn’t think women belonged in theological education. One male student commented, “Women should only be getting a marriage degree.” He always tried to discourage me. Every Saturday night he came to where I worked as a waitress and he never gave me a tip. On my last day there, I asked him why he had never left me a tip. He threw two quarters at me and said, “There.” I looked at him and said, “I forgive you.” I walked away a better person.

So many times in life, I know I had the right to be mad, but I thank God for his help to choose forgiveness. Through its exercise, it has become a holy habit. I remind myself, if I wronged a person, I would want forgiveness as well.

Even now, women ministers deal with male colleagues who do not welcome women in ministry and we are “invisible” to them. Sometimes, even women don’t think I measure up as the image of a pastor’s wife. With the help of the Holy Spirit, I can be content and return slights with his love. I can treat even my detractors with respect and serve them when the opportunity arises. I pray for opportunities to show love. I seek the grace to forgive as he has forgiven me.

For in the end we will not be judge by our race, gender, or position, but what we did for Jesus Christ.

