

# How to Keep Score

by Roland Foster

There is a story, certainly apocryphal, about President Andrew Jackson, whose reputation for toughness earned him the nickname "Old Hickory" during the war of 1812.

On their wedding day, the story goes, Jackson and his bride set out to drive some distance in a one-horse carriage. As they went along, the horse stumbled, causing the carriage to lurch forward. Giving the horse a baleful look, Jackson said, "That's one." All was serene for a few miles, until the unlucky beast stumbled again. "That's two," said Jackson. After another while, again the horse stumbled. Jackson pulled back on the reins, stopping the carriage. "That's three," he said. He set the brake, then calmly stepped down, walked around in front of the horse, drew his pistol, and shot the poor animal between the eyes.

Mrs. Jackson gasped. "Andrew, honey, that's awful! How could you just shoot that poor horse? You shouldn't have done that." Holstering his pistol, Jackson looked his bride in the eye. "That's one," he said.

The other day my bride did something that irked me, I forget what; and I jokingly said, half under my breath, "That's one." Later, as I was thinking about our relationship, I realized that during 3½ years of courtship and many years of marriage we have developed a wonderful way of keeping score. In all that time, no matter how many times each of us has managed to offend the other, we never seem to have gotten beyond "That's one."

Someone, perhaps Dirty Harry, has popularized the saying, "I don't get mad, I get even." God has a much better way: if you get mad, don't get even — get over it! Because we are sinful, selfish creatures, we often offend each other, or take offense when none was intended. Forgiveness is the soap and water that washes away the smelly, poisonous residues of those sins and resentments, making our relationship clean and healthy again.

Forgiveness, like love, is a decision that is ours to make. Let us make sure that the score, in our loving relationships, and particularly in our marriages, always stays tied at 0-0, so that each new offense can be counted with "That's one."

*Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)*