

Small Group Discussion

PART III Forgiveness **November 19-20, 2011**

Group Leader: This could be a very personal, intrusive discussion on bitterness. There are some who have unforgiveness that they don't see, you might have to drill in a little to ask if they have really forgiven those that they are blaming for an evil and not accepting any of the blame themselves (divorce, broken relationships, etc.). Others may know that they have forgiveness issues but don't want to address them, these you may need to show grace but push them in the area of the damage of unforgiveness. Everyone has been hurt in their lives and have had to address this at one time or another, for them it would be helpful for them to remember the story and how God worked them through the process of acknowledging their wrong and addressing it.

GL = *Group Leader* notes & suggestions

GL – In preparation for the group, gather rocks that are smaller river rocks, big enough to write a name or offense on it. Also gather some Sharpie permanent markers, one for each person in your group.

Getting Started

If you have the technology, view the trailer for the movie “Live to Forgive” on Godtube at <http://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=FFF10MNU>. While forgiveness does not usually call us to forgive a father who murdered a son's mother, the forgiveness God grants to me is powerful enough to allow us to forgive the worst offense.

Forgiveness is not an easy thing to give, it assumes a hurt of some kind that when I give forgiveness I can no longer treating someone based on their offense.

The elements of forgiveness include

- a hurt relationship,
- accepting responsibility,
- humility to seek forgiveness,
- forgiveness granted and
- punishment accepted by the forgiver.

What makes forgiveness so difficult to give away?

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What makes unforgiveness so hard to maintain?

*What is the difference of giving forgiveness to someone who asks for it and giving it to someone who doesn't ask for it, or want it? **GL**-In circumstances where the offender isn't acknowledging an offense or desiring your forgiveness it may be necessary for the offended to forgive without gaining the repentance of the offender.*

Forgiveness Defined:

Ceasing to feel resentment for wrongs and offenses; pardon, involving restoration of broken relationships. Primarily, forgiveness is an act of God, releasing sinners from judgment and freeing them from the divine penalty of their sin. Since only God is holy, only God can forgive sin (Mk 2:7; Lk 5:21). Forgiveness is also a human act toward one's neighbor, given new incentive and emphasis in the NT because of God's forgiveness in the death of Christ.¹

What sticks out to you in this definition of forgiveness?

Example of Forgiveness

READ: Genesis 50:14-21

Review the story of Joseph (his brothers' jealousy, betrayal, selling into slavery). *Why would Joseph have the reason to be unforgiving?*

What could Joseph had done to his brothers to revenge their offences?

Why did Joseph choose to forgive his brothers based on 50:20

How did Joseph gain this perspective

How does this story demonstrate that Joseph had already forgiven his brothers before they asked for it?

Requirements of Forgiveness

¹ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 810 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988).

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READ: 2 Corinthians 7:10

For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. (NLT)

What is the first requirement of receiving forgiveness?

READ: Matthew 16:14-15

If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.. (NLT)

What is the second requirement of receiving God's forgiveness?

Why do you think I must forgive others in order to receive God's forgiveness?

Getting Personal

GL – Invite the group to take some rocks from the pile in front and write on the rock with a Sharpie either the person who has hurt you, or the offense that has hurt you. This may be a person, or you may be blaming God for a circumstance in your life.

Vern talked about the group that lived in the bondage of unforgiveness by taking a rock and writing the person or offense on it and carrying it around with you until you are ready to grant God's forgiveness. This is not only a person that is asking for forgiveness and understands the hurt they have caused, but includes those who have hurt you and don't know that they have, or don't believe they have done anything wrong.

Write down your list of those who have hurt you whom you haven't forgiven.

Don't grant forgiveness quickly, acknowledge the hurt, its cost to you or to those around you. When you are willing, transfer God's forgiveness to you to their offense. When you do that either bury your rock or throw it in the river so you can't get to it again.

Recommendation: The key verse for Forgiveness is **Colossians 3:13** *"Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."* (Colossians 3:13, NLT) Ask the group to memorize this verse and claim it with their choice to grant God's forgiveness to the person or offense.

Check out the Unburdened website that will help you through this series at www.unburdened.me The Resources page has some extra help in the category of Forgiveness.

