

SESSION 3 – FORGIVENESS

Getting Started

Ice Breaker: Who is someone you have looked up to, whether as a child or recently, and why?
(If your group is large, answer this question in groups of 2-4)

Take It In (Watch the Video):

- *write out your notes*

Talk About it!

1. How have you seen forgiveness or unforgiveness impact relationships? What are some negative effects when people do not forgive?
2. Read **Psalm 86:5** and **Psalm 32:1-2**
 - a. How has the forgiveness of God impacted your life and how has it brought healing to you?
3. Read **Colossians 3:13** and **Ephesians 4:31-32**
 - a. What do you think it means to forgive others as you have been forgiven? How easy or difficult has that been for you to do? What makes it easy or difficult to forgive someone?
4. Read **Proverbs 17:9** and **Proverbs 18:19**
 - a. Has there ever been a time when someone has forgiven you? How did that impact you?
 - b. Can you share about a time when you had to dig deep and forgive someone? What was that like and how did it affect your life?
5. Sometimes family patterns keep us from forgiving, i.e. stonewalling, grudges, weaponizing the past
 - a. What is one pattern that you have recognized in your own family that you would like to break free from? What decision(s) do you need to make in order for that to happen?
6. Injury, sin, and hurt will happen in our relationships but our response is our responsibility.
 - a. Do you think forgiveness needs to happen right away? Why or why not?
7. Is there anyone that you need to forgive? Or anyone in your life to whom you need to apologize?
 - a. Take time to pray for God's love and forgiveness to be present in your relationships.

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A Guide to Forgiveness

Forgiveness can be a deep work, and may not even feel possible at times. As we reflect on the love of God and the forgiveness that He extends to us, allow Him to bring healing to your heart through the work of forgiveness. When you're ready, walk through the four stages of forgiveness. It may be wise to seek counseling or therapy during this process, especially if it involves trauma.

1) Uncover Your Anger

Identify and describe your grievance story. The goal is to have clarity on what happened and how it made you feel. If you haven't done that yet, do it now. It could help to do this in the format of prayer with God. You could also write it down or type it out if that's helpful.

2) Decide to Forgive

There's a common saying that unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting it to harm the other person. Before we decide to forgive, we might need to recognize the ways that unforgiveness is actually harming us. Deciding to forgive someone is deciding to be free from the posture of victimhood and disempowerment. Ask God to help you walk in the freedom of forgiveness.

3) Work on Forgiveness

This doesn't happen on autopilot and can require work. What may help is trying to view the person through the lens of empathy and compassion, to rehumanize them and see them as a person with experiences of pain and brokenness. Ask, "what are the factors in their life that could have led them to the point of doing the wrong that they did?" Ask God to give you see His perspective.

4) Release From Emotional Imprisonment

With the person in mind, talk to God and release the pain and the person to Him:

Heavenly Father, I surrender and release to you all of the anger and pain that I feel because of the wrong done to me by [this person, in this particular incident, at this particular time], and I surrender the pain of it to You... I give all of it to You, God, and I welcome Your healing in its place.

Heavenly Father, I forgive [this person] for what they did to me, the harm that it caused me, and the pain that it left me with... I forgive them.

And, Father, I bless that person with... [pray for specific blessings - wisdom, joy, provision, etc.]

Heavenly Father, thank you for Your love and forgiveness toward me. Help me to walk in that love and forgiveness and offer it to others as You offer it to me. Amen.