

Small Group Studies

Walking in Forgiveness

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Leader's Guide

Walking in Forgiveness

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Section 1 - Receiving God's Forgiveness

Week 1 - God—The Forgiving God

What do we know about God that serves as a foundation to our understanding of forgiveness?

1. God is omniscient or all-knowing.

This means the following:

- ❖ He sees all that occurs in every place and keeps watch upon the evil and the good (Pro. 15:3).
- ❖ He knows everything that occurs in nature (Ps. 147:4; Mt. 6:8; 10:29).
- ❖ He knows the ways of man (Ps. 33:13-15; Pro. 5:21).
- ❖ He knows all of the deeds and experiences of man (Ps. 139:2-3).
- ❖ He knows all of man's words (Ps. 139:4).
- ❖ He knows all of man's sorrows (Ex. 3:7).
- ❖ He knows our thoughts (Ps. 139:1-2).
- ❖ He knows for all eternity what will be for all eternity (Acts 15:18).

Known to God from eternity are all His works. Acts 15:18

2. God is a forgiving God.

There are many verses that present God as a God of mercy and forgiveness. Many of these verses challenge some of our concepts of our holy God.

Supporting Verses:

a. Exodus 34:6-7

*And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, **merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the***

fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation."

Observations:

b. Nehemiah 9:17

*They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But you God are **ready to pardon**, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them.*

Observations:

c. Psalm 32:1-5

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, **my bones grew old** through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.*

Observations:

d. Psalm 86:1-5, 15

*Bow down Your ear, O LORD, hear me; for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life, for I am holy; You are my God; save Your servant who trusts in You! Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I cry to You all day long. Rejoice the soul of Your servant, for to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. For You, Lord, are good, and **ready to forgive**, and **abundant in mercy** to all those who call upon You...15 But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and*

gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.

Observations:

e. Psalm 103:1-18

*Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. The LORD is **merciful and gracious**, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But the **mercy of the LORD** is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.*

Observations:

f. Psalm 130

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord More than those

who watch for the morning--Yes, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

Observations:

g. Isaiah 55:7

*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will **abundantly pardon**.*

[Ask, "What does this verse teach us about God's desire to forgive us?"]

Observations:

h. Micah 7:18-20

*Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because **He delights in mercy**. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old.*

Observations:

i. Matthew 9:1-8

So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!" But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do

you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

Observations:

j. Acts 13:38-39

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Observations:

k. Ephesians 1:3-8

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence.

Observations:

l. Colossians 2:13-15

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your

flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Observations:

Week 2 – The Nature of God's Forgiveness

What is the nature of God's forgiveness?

God has a unique ability that none of us possess. Along with all of His superhuman abilities, He is actually able to purposefully forget. The God Who is all-powerful, everywhere-present and all-knowing _____
_____.

The nature of God's forgiveness is seen in the phrases that He uses to describe His forgiveness.

When God forgives our sins, He—

1. Remembers our sins _____.

Jeremiah 31:34b

"For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

2. Removes our sins as far from Him as the east is _____.

Psalm 103:12

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

"As the east and the west can never meet in one point, but be forever at the same distance from each other, so our sins and their decreed punishment are removed to an eternal distance by his mercy." -Clark's Commentary

"They are so removed that they cannot affect us anymore. We are safe from all condemnation for our sins, as if they had not been committed at all."

-Barnes' Notes

"...so as no longer to affect our relations to Him." -JFB Commentary

3. Casts our sins into the depths of the sea, _____ to be retrieved again.

Micah 7:19b

You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

"...perhaps there may be some allusion to the Egyptians drowned in the Red sea; and what is cast into the sea, especially into the depths of it, is irrecoverable, not to be fetched up again, nor does it rise more; and so it is with the sins of God's people, forgiven for Christ's sake, even 'all' of them; for they have all been bore by Christ, and are covered, blotted out, and pardoned, not one remains unforgiven." -*John Gill's Exposition of the Bible*

The nature of God's forgiveness is reflected in the definition of the word "forgive."

1. The word "forgive: means "to _____."
2. To forgive is to absolve from _____ to punishment for a crime or fault committed.
3. Forgiveness is the voluntary _____ of a person over which one has legal control.
4. When God forgives it does not mean that He temporarily _____ which He may at some later time inflict.
5. God's forgiveness is _____ and it is _____.

The nature of God's forgiveness is reflected in the Presidential Pardon.

In the United States there is a prerogative that only the President has. It is called the "Presidential Pardon."

God's forgiveness is very much like the presidential pardon. There are five characteristics of a presidential pardon:

1. It must be exercised by one who _____ to pardon.
2. No other judge or magistrate can _____ the pardon.
3. The crime for which the pardon is granted is _____ from all police or FBI records.

4. You can never _____ that particular crime _____.

5. That crime can never be _____ again.

In other words, it is just as if the crime never occurred. Even on a job application that asks for whether or not you have ever been convicted of a crime, you can legally say "NO!"

Week 3 – Receiving God's Forgiveness

What are the conditions that we must meet to receive God's pardon?

We have learned in previous lessons that God is poised to forgive. In this lesson we will learn that there are certain conditions that we have to meet if we are to receive His forgiveness. There are certain things that act as triggers to His forgiveness.

The six conditions for God's forgiveness include the following:

1. We must _____ the Lord.

The Lord is abundant in mercy to all who call upon Him. Psalm 86:5

Even though we have offended or sinned against others, we have first and foremost _____. Forgiveness depends on the one who has been offended or sinned against.

2. We must _____ our sin.

I John 1:9

If we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You must admit to a crime before pardon can be given.

3. We must _____ of our sin (Acts 8:22).

Repentance "implies an intellectual and a hearty giving up of all controversy with God upon each and every point. It implies a conviction that God is wholly right, and the sinner wholly wrong, and a thorough and hearty abandonment of all excuses and apologies for sin." -Charles Finney

4. We must be willing to _____ our sin.

Whosoever confesses and forsakes his sins will have mercy. Proverbs 28:13

5. We must be willing to _____.

Matthew 6:14-15

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Colossians 3:12-14

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

6. We must _____ the pardon.

God is gracious, but He will not force the acceptance of His grace upon man.

Accepting our forgiveness has to do with _____.
Forgiveness is completed by our acceptance.

Section 2 - Forgiving Others

Week 4 - The Importance of Forgiving Others

How important is it for us to forgive others?

Jesus taught that forgiving others is extremely important. Here are some of the things that Jesus said about the issue of forgiving others.

1. Jesus taught that forgiving others is not a _____.

It is our Christian duty to forgive. It is a command of Jesus.

Mark 11:25

*And **whenever** you stand praying, if you have **anything** against **anyone**, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.*

This verse indicates that...

- We are to forgive others _____ we pray to God
- We are to forgive _____.
- We are to forgive _____.

You have to admit, this is pretty inclusive.

2. Jesus taught us that our forgiveness of others is _____ for our receiving God's forgiveness.

- ❖ He included this teaching in the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:12; Luke 11:4).

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Matthew 6:12

"This is the invariable rule by which God dispenses pardon. He that comes before him unwilling to forgive, harboring dark and revengeful thoughts, how can he expect that God will show him that mercy which he is unwilling to show to others?" -*Barnes' Notes*

- ❖ He emphasized it again on a number of occasions.

Matthew 6:14-15

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Luke 6:35-37

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

3. Jesus taught that we are to _____ forgive when those who have offended us repent.

Luke 17:3-4

Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, "I repent," you shall forgive him.

4. Jesus taught that we are to forgive without _____.

Jesus had just finished talking about offenses in the local church and how to resolve them. Peter had come with an honest question.

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." Luke 17:5

5. Jesus taught that forgiving others was not dependent upon their _____ for our forgiveness.

Mark 11:25

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

- ❖ Jesus demonstrated this on the cross (Luke 23:34).

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

- ❖ Stephen demonstrated this at his stoning (Acts 7:60).

Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

We do not have to wait until we "feel like it" to forgive. This is a command of God and not subject to our feelings.

Week 5 – Withholding Forgiveness

Jesus taught that if we do not forgive we will experience negative fruit.

There are six consequences to us when we do not forgive others.

1. Our prayers will be _____.

Mark 11:25

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

2. Our gifts and ministries will be rendered _____.

Matthew 5:23-24

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

3. God may _____ His forgiveness.

So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses. Matthew 18:35

4. The sins of others will remain _____.

John 20:23, NLT

If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you refuse to forgive them, they are unforgiven.

5. We will personally suffer and dwell in a _____ of our own making.

Jesus told the parable of the unforgiving servant in response to the disciple

6. We will experience the fruit of _____.

Hebrews 12:14-15

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled...

When we do not forgive others physiologically and psychologically we experience some negative reactions. This has been demonstrated from a medical point of view.

- High blood pressure
- Increased levels of stress
- Hostility in relationships
- Anger and intolerance
- Increased heart rate
- Higher instance of substance abuse
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Difficulty in developing wholesome friendships
- Headaches and chronic pain
- Inability to commit to others

The big question is, " _____?"

Week 6 – Extending Forgiveness to Others

What does it mean to extend forgiveness to others?

Extending God's forgiveness means several things:

1. It means that we _____ to them in words.
2. It means that we refuse to _____ to the offending party again.
3. It means that we treat the offending party as if it had _____.
4. It means that we refuse to _____ anymore.

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

5. It means that we refuse to _____ in our minds.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.

Prayer of Forgiveness

Lord Jesus, I come to you today in total thanksgiving for what you did on the cross for me. I confess I'm a sinner and repent of all sin, known and unknown that I've committed. I ask you to forgive me of my entire past. I realize it was my sin that nailed you to the cross. You died for me and for everyone who sinned against me. I choose, this day, to forgive _____ and ask you to come to them with the same mercy you extended to me. Please forgive me for all feelings of resentment, bitterness, and anger I had toward them as a response to my hurt. By Your grace, I release them. Thank you for extending forgiveness to me and enabling me to forgive all who have offended me.

In Jesus Name,
Amen.

Section 3 - Forgiving Ourselves

Week 7 - Forgiving Ourselves

How important is forgiving ourselves?

Forgiving ourselves is just as important as forgiving others. Paul indicated that in order for us to win the race that we are running, we must have the ability to forget some things. We have to be able to forget the past and move forward into the future.

Philippians 3:12-15

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

Forgetting is not a normal human ability.

The dictionary defines the word "forget" in several ways.

1. To be _____ something that was previously known.
2. To fail to _____.
3. To fail to do something unintentionally or _____.
4. To fail to take through _____.
5. To lose interest in or regard for; to overlook _____; to disregard.
6. To leave _____ or to fail to think of.

The New Testament word for "forget" means "to neglect or _____."

Forgetting means that we are to no longer nurture certain things in our mind.

1. There are certain things that we are to _____ and no longer care for in our minds.
2. There are certain things that we are not to let _____ or thought life.
3. There are certain things upon which we are not to _____ or gaze.
4. There are certain things that we are not to cultivate, _____.
5. There are certain things that we must let _____ for lack of nourishment.

Forgetting involves the discipline of one's thought life.

When Paul talked of forgetting, he did so in the context of a runner in a race. If a runner is going to be successful he must be focused on the goal and not allow his mind to be dominated by things that can only hinder him. He has to focus on the race that is set before him.

Paul had many things to forget when it came to his personal race, including:

1. Christians that he had persecuted to death (Acts 8:3; 22:4; Phil. 3:6).
2. Blasphemy that he had uttered against the Lord (I Tim. 1:13).
3. Assisting at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58; 8:1).
4. The rejection he experienced from the other apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 8:26).
5. The many disappointments, betrayals and heartaches caused by those to whom he ministered (II Cor. 4:8-12; II Tim. 1:15; 4:10).

Any one of these things could have been cared for and nurtured by Paul and could have hindered his progress or become a snare to him. Paul was not going to do this. He was going to look ahead. He made a conscious choice.

He made it for the sake of his call and no one else could do it for him.

Forgetting means adopting the attitude of Joseph.

Genesis 41:50-52

And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

1. Joseph had to learn to forget his toil.
 - a. The word here used for "toil" literally means the following:
 - Heavy weary labor to the point of exhaustion.
 - The produce of labor.
 - Weariness, trouble, vexation.
 - Sorrow
 - b. The toil that Joseph had to forget involved bad experiences and betrayals.

There were times when it seemed that all of life was against him.

- His brothers sold him into slavery.
 - Potiphar's wife made false accusations against him.
 - Potiphar (whom he had served faithfully) put him into a common prison.
 - The butler broke his promise to him to put in a good word for him.
2. Joseph had to grow from the negative experiences and become fruitful.

Joseph had pressed on in every situation. He didn't blame God or others for his plight. He saw the hand of God in his circumstance and believed that God had a purpose for his life. He became fruitful in the land of his affliction.

3. Joseph's naming of his children indicated the work had been done.
 - a. His first child he named Manasseh (forgetting).

- b. His second child he named Ephraim (doubly fruitful).

When he did see his brothers again, he had the power to retaliate but he did not (Gen. 45:1-8; 50:19-20).

Genesis 50:19-20

Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."

Week 7 – Walking in Freedom through Forgiveness

What are the results of forgiveness?

When forgiveness is granted and received it brings forth some wonderful results. These results include:

1. _____

Acts 13:38-39, NLT

"Brothers, listen! In this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. Everyone who believes in him is freed from all guilt and declared right with God--something the Jewish law could never do"

In other words we are justified before God and man. We can go forward _____ had happened.

2. Clearing of the _____

2 Corinthians 7:10-11

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

In other words we can be healed from within and the past does not need to leave it a _____ on us.

3. _____

Psalms 51:12

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

This means instead of _____ there can be joy.

4. _____

Acts 3:19

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...

The Amplified Bible says it this way, "That the times of refreshing, or recovering from the effects of the heat, of reviving with fresh air—may come from the presence of the Lord."

The word "refreshing" from the Greek means "a cooling off or refreshing, recovery of breath, refreshment of one's spirit, revive" (Thayer).

This means that our relationship with God and our relationship with others are restored back to where they were _____.

5. _____

Luke 7:36-48

Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. 37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, 38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." 41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." 48 Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

There is no sin so gross nor so often repeated that it cannot be forgiven. Jesus admonition about forgiving "seventy times seven" reflects the heart of God when it comes to forgiveness.

Jesus reminded us that those who have been forgiven much, love much (Luke 7:47).

Those who have been forgiven much, love much.