

From the Inside Out: A Study on Forgiveness

An Overview

Topics to be included, not necessarily in this order, are:

1. **Foundation** for forgiveness: I have been forgiven
2. **Definition** of forgiveness and what it **IS** and **ISN'T**
3. **Cautions** in approaching this topic
4. **Power source** for the Christian walk
5. Our make up: **body, soul, and spirit**
6. Why does forgiveness seem to come **easier** for some people?
7. Forgiveness as **good mental health**?
8. **What God does** and what He calls us to do
9. Making an **apology** meaningful
10. Examples from **the Bible of forgiveness situations**
11. Refraining from **causing harm** that puts others in position of having to forgive us
12. **Why forgive? Cost of not forgiving**
13. Does forgiveness necessarily include **reconciliation or restoration** of relationship?
14. How about **making amends**?
15. **Deep hurts** such as sexual abuse, infidelity, betrayal; what do we do?
16. **Anger toward God**
17. Living with **unresolved issues**: what if she won't forgive me? What if he doesn't apologize?
18. Dealing with **oversensitivity** and being too easily offended
19. Film clips, songs, testimonies

This list is not all inclusive; we will address other topics or concerns that might come up from your study, personal experience, group discussions.

Personal Application – January, 2016

As you study and meditate on the topic of forgiveness, think about personal application. At the outset, complete the items below. Use whatever abbreviations or symbols you might need – in case you are concerned about someone finding your notes. There is also plenty of space for you to jot down anything that you find helpful or challenging during the next weeks – along with the date. This might include action steps, convictions, resolutions, whatever – to chart progress on your journey of forgiveness.

1. I need to forgive _____.

Things that are getting in the way are:

Below are some things I am hearing or processing during this class that might help – also my record of action steps with dates I completed them.

2. I need to ASK _____ for forgiveness.

Things that are getting in the way:

Below are class items that might be of help – and any action steps (and dates) I take.

Notes on Application

Notes from Group Presentation

Discussion Questions for Small Groups

January 13, 2016

NOTES:

During large group time, jot down some notes for group discussion.

Define Forgiveness: (in your group discussion, expand, add other ideas)

Forgiveness is NOT:

Some Cautions as we approach topic of Forgiveness:

Any other notes

In your small group:

1. Do some of the things on the above lists seem like making up **excuses not to forgive**? Do you have problems with some of them? (If so, jot down and save for reference as class proceeds. See if clarification comes – or if issues of concern persist, have your group leader turn in them into Beth.)

2. With the caution of going slowly with deep wounds, does it give you more freedom to discuss a topic and/or relief that we are not going to be simplistic in our discussion?

Look and read together in your group **Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11**

Write one of the verses out:

Do you find comfort in these words?

3. Why is it **SO HARD** to forgive?

4. In large group, we talked about Christ bringing **light into our dark world**, discuss physical blindness. How many ramifications of being blind can you come up with?

How are the same limits real in terms of spiritual blindness?

Foundations:

God's Forgiveness and The Nature of God's Kingdom

(Assignment for Week 2)

I. GOD'S FORGIVENESS

How much time passed after creation before sin became an issue? How many generations? _____

Read Chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis and answer the following questions:

1. Who are the main characters? _____, _____, and _____
2. Did Eve know the rules? _____
3. What were they? (**Genesis 3:1-3**)

4. What 3 things listed in verse 6 convinced her that it would be OK to disobey?
5. What were some immediate consequences?

Verse 6:

Verse 7:

Verse 8:

Verses 9-10

Verse 12:

Verse 14:

Verse 16

Verses 17-18:

Verse 19:

Verses 22-24

6. Why wouldn't God want them to live forever? What would it be like to have this life with its trials never end?
7. What hint is there in this passage that God already was forming a plan to deal with sin?

Read Romans 5:12-21. Paul gives short summary of the ultimate plan. What would it involve?

However, before this Gospel was clearly demonstrated and implemented, generations of God's people had to deal with sin in another way. In **Hebrews 9** the system of offerings and sacrifices for sins during Old Testament times is summarized, and we are told in **verse 22** that without the _____, there is no forgiveness. If you would contrast the practices described in Leviticus with Hebrews, you would find that there is a new, final, and totally adequate sacrifice offered through _____. Even though the pillars of the faith in the Old Testament, such as Abraham, Moses, other prophets and leaders lived with the old system, their hearts had faith that God had the ultimate provision. **Scan Hebrews chapter 11.** Repeatedly you find the two word phrase _____. We are blessed to live after Christ came to this earth, and the plan was fully revealed.

Read Hebrews 11:13-16; 39-40. Summarize what kind of faith they had. **Write a definition** from verse one of Hebrews.

"Now faith is _____"

Read Romans 5:1-11. Using that passage and **Romans 3:23, Galatians 2:15-16, John 14:6, Romans 1:16-17,** and **John 1:9,** and any others that you know, **write a brief description of the Gospel as you understand it.**

Do you view this as truth? Is this real in your life? If not or if this is new information, it is important that you wrestle with it and talk to someone like your small group leader or a pastor to clarify questions. The study on forgiveness that we will be pursuing will be based on this foundation. Although people who believe differently certainly can extend and receive forgiveness to and from others, their motivation, expectations, and approach may be very different.

When you desire the benefits and results of the Christian life, you need to ask yourself if you have the prerequisites. Just focusing on the behavior you want can become an exercise in frustration when you find yourself never measuring up.

Take the following passage and fill in the appropriate IF and THEN columns. If you want the outcomes, you need to look back to see IF you have what precedes and predicts them.

Philippians 2:1- 5

IF you have

Then

Throughout this study, you will be repeatedly asked to go to the source of life, the source of power. We are not left with our own paltry resources to live the Christian life described in Scripture.

Write out and memorize 2 verses that are key in knowing our need and finding relief as we cooperate with God in His plan for us.

John 15:5

Philippians 4:13

Write down any comments or questions to talk about in your small group.

Beth Mellema, 2016,

II. NATURE OF GOD'S KINGDOM

God extends His forgiveness and His provision for us individually to be in right relationship with Him. A further extension of this is the description of His kingdom – how this personal relationship should/will affect our interaction with others, our outreach to our world, the kind of rule He plans.

Many of you have gone through Don Spade's Knowing Him at an earlier time in Women's Bible study. He reviewed the "Father's plan for reaching the world." The Jews had lived through centuries of kings, battles, oppression such as under the Egyptians in the Old Testament. At the time of Jesus' birth and life, they were suffering under Rome. Throughout their history, God's chosen people were accustomed to being ruled by kings, wars, and trouble. They looked forward to the Messiah coming to establish an earthly kingdom of power and victory.

I imagine the atmosphere was electrifying (after the Transfiguration) with everyone shouting, "Let's take the world!" Jesus quiets them and begins sharing the game plan to bring freedom from Rome and the curse of sin. They all listen with great anticipation to the new plan. It is an awesome plan and one Jesus will explain and live out in from of His new leaders and disciples over the coming two years. It will end in the ultimate act of love – His own death. Get ready to have your world rocked!...It isn't rocket science...The plan is so simple and yet so revolutionary. Jesus unveils to His new leaders the team plan, which, simply put, is something like, "Don't kill a Roman; hug a Roman." From the world's standpoint, is is a crazy plan, to love your enemies. How in the world will loving my enemy ever bring about change, freedom, and liberation? It must have sounded to them like the craziest plan in the world. It still sounds crazy 2,000 years later. How can loving my enemy free me from him?...It is a radical type of love. It is not human love, which always has some kind of return tied into it. It is a love that expects nothing in return (Luke 6:35). It is this radical, supernatural, God-like kind of love that will change the world.
(Spade, pp. 111-112)

Jesus was ushering in a spiritual kingdom not an earthly kingdom: the sacrifice of His life for us and His resurrection, the love He wants to empower us to show to each other in this life through the provision of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the ultimate eternal kingdom which will be both physical and spiritual. This is no sentimental, unpredictable love but a miraculous, solid force of genuine care, sacrifice, outreach, humility, suffering, and forgiveness that only God can produce in the human heart. Spade reminds us that "...to extend forgiveness is no human act. It is a kind of love that can only be brought about by God. It is an outrageous kind of love." This was not exactly the kind of plan the Jewish leaders were looking for; it was not the way they

Beth Mellema, 2016,

planned to defeat Rome. Their faith was one based on works, actions, sacrifices, eventual conquest; Jesus was an enigma. Paul describes how they couldn't handle His teachings.

Read I Corinthians 1:18-30. Ponder this passage and comment on why Jesus plan, why God's provision was so hard for people to grasp. We so often just assume it, wonder why they were so resistant to accepting it, and don't stop to think of how revolutionary it was.

Why would Paul call Jesus a **stumbling block**? (see also Romans 9:30-33; I Peter 2:4-8)

Has Jesus and His plan been a stumbling block for you? For people you know? In what way?

How might His message be a stumbling block in our culture, in our world?

Beth Mellema, 2016,

