

## Notes from Group Presentation – Week 11

## Packet 11: Never Too Late

Here we are at the end of our study. We have talked of small grievances which can be resolved relatively easily **if** we communicate, clarify, and extend/accept a genuine apology. Even these small misunderstandings or slights can, however, grow to unresolved grudges and alienation if not attended to.

### The Growing Importance of Apologies

From On Apology

By Aaron Lazare

One of the most profound human interactions is the offering and accepting of apologies. Apologies have the power to heal humiliations and grudges, remove the desire for vengeance, and generate forgiveness on the part of the offended parties. For the offender, they can diminish the fear of retaliation and relieve the guilt and shame that can grip the mind with a persistence and tenacity that are hard to ignore. The result of the apology process, ideally, is the reconciliation and restoration of broken relationships.

Most people, if asked, will tell you stories of grudges that have destroyed important relationships and, in some instances, have even torn families and friends apart. The offenses that lead to these grudges range from events such as failing to visit a friend in a hospital or not attending a wedding or funeral to betrayals of trust and public humiliations. An effective apology

at the time might have prevented the grudge, and a belated apology, months, years, or even decades later, might have effected reconciliation.

We can experience significant wrongs at the hands of another that involve deep wounds and ongoing rifts. Even in these, however, there is hope for healing, whether it be healing in my heart allowing me to go on even if the other person never acknowledges the wrong OR whether there be actual apology and changed behavior.

As a final exercise, I would like you to review two Old Testament stories that we alluded to in earlier weeks: Jacob and Esau; and Joseph and his brothers.

#### I. Jacob and Esau

(Genesis 25: 20-34; Chapter 27:1-45; Chapters 32-33)

Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were blessed by a son in their old age after they had given up hope that God's promise of descendants would come true. This son, Isaac, later married Rebekah, and they had twin sons: Esau and Jacob. Earlier in our study, we talked about the favoritism of Isaac toward Esau and

Rebekah toward Jacob and the resulting sibling rivalry and alienation that occurred. After Rebekah helped Jacob steal Esau's due blessing (as firstborn),

*Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."*

*When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Your brother Esau is consoling himself with the thought of killing you. Now then my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. Stay with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides. When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I'll send word for you to come back from there. (Genesis 27:41-45)*

Over **20 years** later (see Genesis 31:38), Jacob was tired of the frustrations he had in the land of his father-in-law – where he had fled – and God told him to back to the "land of your fathers and relatives, and I will be with you" (Genesis 31:3). Chapter 32 describes the predictable fear Jacob had, having wronged his brother years previously, and the uncertainty he had regarding what kind of reception would await him. Would Esau still want to kill him?

**Read Genesis 32:3-21.**

1. How did Jacob feel? (Genesis 32: 6-7)
2. What are 4 things he did in preparation for meeting his brother?
  - a. Genesis 32:7-8; 33: 1-2
  - b. Genesis 32:9-12;
  - c. Genesis 32: 13-21
  - d. Genesis 33:3
3. How did Esau react? (Genesis 33: 4-9)
4. Write out verse 33:10 describing how Jacob felt when he knew he truly was forgiven.

In spite of his deception in stealing his brother's blessing, Jacob encountered forgiveness and reconciliation. Details are not given regarding what happened in Esau's thoughts and attitudes, but distance, time, his own success, and faith must have softened his heart and enabled him to forgive his brother. This is a beautiful description of forgiveness and restored relationships. This does not always play itself out in families, but God's giving us record of Jacob's guilt and Esau's forgiveness can instill hope and motivation in our hearts. Although Jacob's motivation in this case was started out as self-serving (wanting to go home and afraid), he was still welcomed by his brother.

## **II. Joseph's Story**

Knowing what damage favoritism caused in his own family of origin, Jacob, now called Israel, went on to repeat the behavior! He had a favorite wife (Rachel) and a favorite son (**Joseph** – see Genesis 37:3) Once again, a favorite son alienated his brothers. Earlier (Lesson 6) we read how Joseph baited his brothers and how Jacob's preference toward Joseph created anger and envy (Genesis 37). They sold him to passing merchants, and **chapters 38 through 42 of Genesis** describe Joseph's fascinating experience. When you have time, review this whole story. Because of famine in the land where Joseph's father and brothers lived and because Joseph had been placed in a position of managing the food resources of Egypt, his brothers ended up coming to him for help **37 years after they had sold him into slavery**. They did not recognize him immediately, but Joseph recognized them. In chapter 45, we are told how Joseph finally made himself known to his brothers, and how he was able to say that God used his experiences for good. He brought his brothers and widowed father to Egypt (47:11). The story has a "nice ending" and is an encouragement that our difficult situations can also work out in the way described in Romans 8:28).

***But wait a minute!*** Jacob, the father of these 12 boys eventually died. (See Genesis 49:33). They had lived peacefully in Egypt together for 17 years (47:28). By this time, if my math is correct, Joseph was 71 years old. He was 17 when his brothers sold him.

**Read Genesis 50:15-21.** What did Joseph's brothers fear after their father had died? What did they do?

It seems like they had never actually asked for forgiveness until now!!

How did Joseph respond to their concerns?

Let the stories Esau and Joseph's hurts, the time that it must have taken to process them, and the eventual healing speak to your hearts. In terms of problems in relationships, there is nothing new under the sun! It is never too late to seek forgiveness, and with God's help, it is never too late to forgive. Don't be afraid

to take the first step if God prompts you. Remember, forgiving is God's work in our heart. It is not something we accomplish on our own.

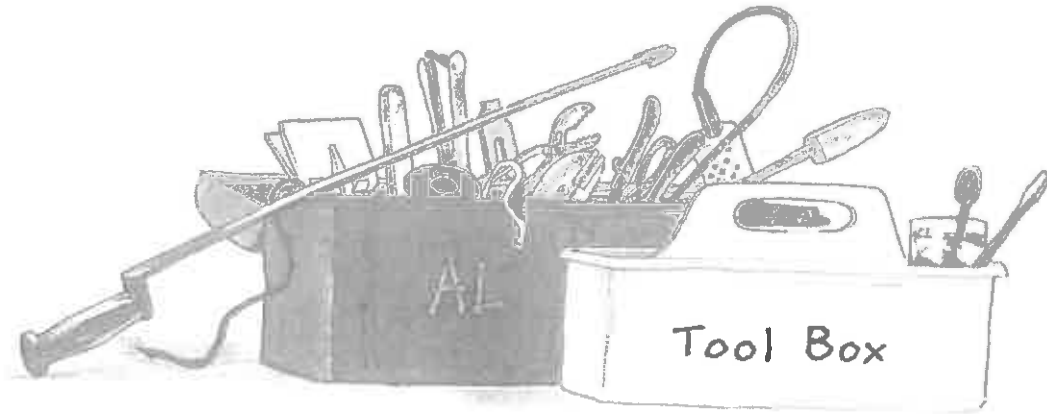
Some final words from one of my favorite books on forgiveness, Helping People Forgive, by David Augsburger:

*The choice to forgive arises from within...Forgiveness is not simply the freeing of oneself from being held hostage by bitterness, grief, or anger, although forgiveness does give the gift of freedom. Nor is it the resolution of exhausted emotions, the fatigue of tired memory, or the finishing of discharged emotions, although forgiveness does require a time of withdrawal, reflection, remembering, and gradual release. It is, instead a clear, present transaction that finishes past situations of failure, forgoes future mistrust and suspicion of betrayal [caution – sometimes boundaries essential and renewed relationship not safe], and forgives in an act of acceptance, grounded in whatever repentance is possible for either or both. (pp. 116-117)*

***Forgiveness is a gift from God: His forgiveness of me and His enabling me to forgive another.***

***"This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us." 1 John 4:10-12***

## Our Course in Review



Review the key words and diagrams below, and jot down short definitions, key words or summaries. Refer back to your previous lessons as needed. These are concepts to take with you from this class as you continue to apply what you are learning about forgiveness. Star ones that are problematic for you, ones you want to study further.

### 1. **Body Soul Spirit Label parts of each and lines of control or influence.** (see pages 2-15)

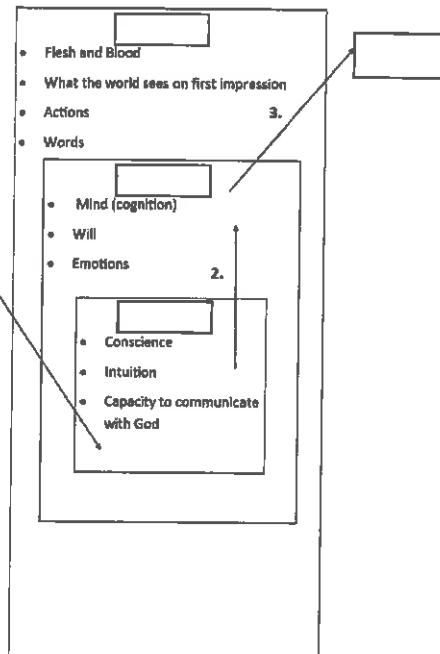
I am told that when Christ lives in me:

1. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in my human spirit.
2. He gains access to my soul and is able to:
  - Teach my mind
  - Control my emotions
  - Direct my will

In turn, He seeks to govern my behavior:

3. What I do and say in actions and words that express themselves through by body out to my world.

**God wants to reveal Himself  
to the World through me!**



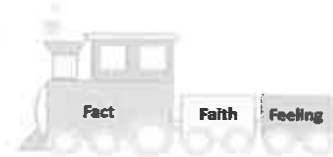
2. **FORMS** – (3-5 through 3-9; review page at beginning of lesson 4)) What are they and which ones do you need to set up?

3. **Put a yes or no by each of the following statements about what forgiveness is or isn't and note any questions.** (See page 2-2 and other places scattered throughout your lessons

- Forgiveness does not mean excusing or minimizing an offense.
- If you have forgiven someone, you should automatically forget the offense.
- An offender still needs to face the consequences of his actions (legal, etc.) even if you have forgiven him.
- Forgiveness always brings reconciliation and restoration in a relationship.
- It wise to set up appropriate boundaries after forgiveness.
- Forgiveness is often not a single moment in time but a process that takes time.
- When you realize you want/need to forgive someone, you don't need to examine your own role in the incident.
- Forgiveness is a miracle
- Refusing to forgive can bind you to a person or incident, can cause bitterness and ineffectiveness
- We can forgive anything if we just put our mind to it and try hard enough.
- If we refuse to forgive someone seeking forgiveness, we can end up adding to their hurt
- Unforgiveness can contribute to many emotional, spiritual, relationship, and physical problems.
- Some people deserve to be forgiven and others don't.
- An apology is needed before a person can forgive.
- Forgiveness is ultimately based on foundation of God's forgiving us
- A perpetrator of an offense may have had some bad experience that excuses his behavior.
- A perpetrator of an offense may have had a bad experience or history that can help us see him or her in a compassionate way – as a fellow human who is valued by God.
- It is most helpful to forgive even a serious hurtful event immediately.
- Sometimes, a person has to have some time to process hurt before she can approach forgiving.
- Forgiveness can free a person to move ahead.
- Children may feel confusion, blame, or guilt for abuse –may not realize the person who hurt her is responsible for behavior.

- There comes a point when it is impossible to forgive or be forgiven.
- Triggers can bring up memories and feelings that we thought were behind us.
- Re-experiencing memories or anger automatically means we haven't forgiven completely.
- Forgiveness is simple and follows a predictable formula.
- It is OK to start with baby steps.
- We can earn forgiveness.
- An effective thing to say to a friend who has been deeply wounded is, "That's in the past. You just have to let go and move on."
- Forgiveness is an increasingly difficult task as the severity of the offense increases.
- The difficulty in forgiveness also depends on how close your relationship is with the offender
- It is harder to forgive a stranger than to forgive a respected person in authority

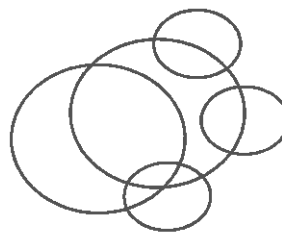
4. **TRAIN** (page 2-15 and yellow resource page #10 at back of binder)



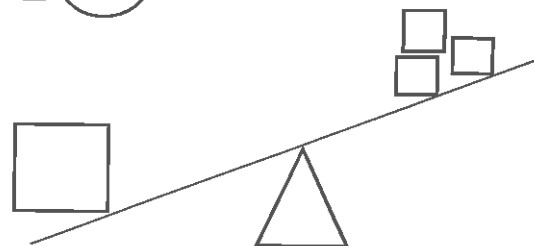
5. **Four choices** we make. (page 2-16)

6. **I can't but Christ can – weakness** and strength (pages 2-9 through 2-14)

7. **Intersecting circles** – (pink resource page #2)



8. **Teeter totter** – (green resource page number 5)





9. Why forgive? (page 9-1 and 9-2)

10. Thought stoppage, thought substitution, reframing (page 8-6)

11. Ways we respond to offenses (4-8 thru 4-10) Which describes you?

12. Share with care: Triangling, involving too many people, confidentiality, trust - Resource #12 at back of binder)

13. Co-dependency (Supporting and caring does not mean taking another's problem on as your own.)

14. False Guilt vs True Guilt (bottom of page 8-6 and 8-7)

15. For an eagle to soar, the \_\_\_\_\_ has to exceed the \_\_\_\_\_.

How does that compare to our experience with forgiveness?

16. What is your favorite Image of Safety? (see pages 9-8 and 9-9)

17. Difference between apology, appeasement, and accounting. (class notes page at beginning of lesson 6; Resource #4)

**18. Pastor Dave Hannig's 3 "simple" statements describing apology (p. 5-4)**

- a.
- b.
- c.

**19. Primary intervention in forgiveness (class notes on p. 6-1)**

**20. Secondary intervention (Class notes lesson 6; page 8-9 Gold Resource page #1 Upper left corner of Resource #3)**

**21. Tertiary intervention**

**22. IF you aren't experiencing fruits of the spirit or finding descriptions of Christian walk real in your life, what should you do? Try harder? Seek God and follow His guidelines? Lean on Him for help in this area. Read Philippians 2:1-8, Colossians 3:1-18. (Look back at pages 1-7 and 1-8; 2-12 and 2-13)**

**23. Triggers (pages 8-5 through 8-9)**

**24. Amends?? What would person you've offended need to sense your apology is genuine and to increase possibility of forgiveness? Ask! You don't EARN their forgiveness, but making amends of some sort may be a needed sign of good will and a step to regaining trust.**

25. **Mark of a Christian** (Salmon colored Resource #8)

26. **Eclipse illustration** (lesson 9-3 and in Resource section # 13)

27. Review **Personal Application** pages (First lesson, 7-9, and an extra as Resource #14 at the end of your binder)

What is your plan from here on? Jot down needs or challenges.

- things you don't understand
- things you feel convicted to act on
- things you need God's power to implement,
- specific people or situation
- need for help from third party
- learning to live with unresolved issues after you have done what can
- need develop healthy sense of weakness and dependence on God