

Class Notes

Date: \_\_\_\_\_





## **BODY**

flesh and blood:  
what the world sees on first impression

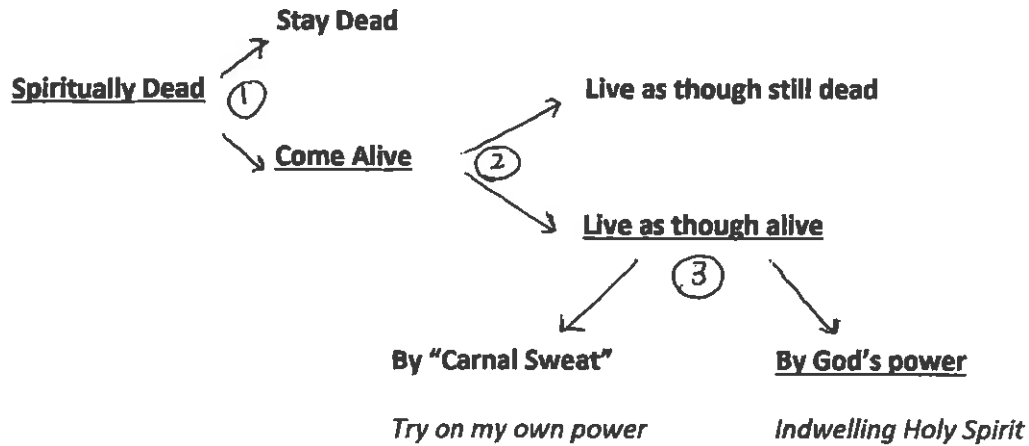
## **SOUL**

- mind (cognition)
- will
- emotions

## **SPIRIT**

- conscience
- intuition
- capacity to  
communicate with  
God

Four Choices We Make in Response to God's Outreach to Us



*(Carnal sweat is futile in*

*both Justification*

*(being made alive)*

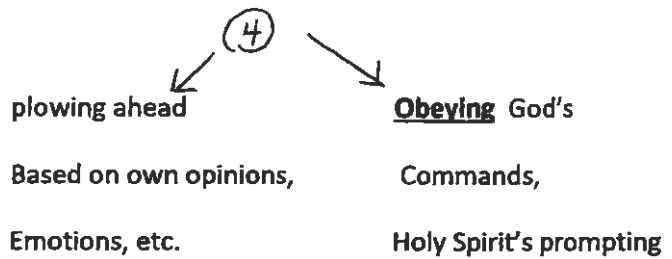
AND

Sanctification

*(growing in Christ likeness;*

*Christian walk)*

**Specific situation**



## Assignment for March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016- Dealing with Major Hurts

**Important to remember:** In the last couple weeks, we have changed our focus somewhat, and you may have found that a bit unsettling. We started with general biblical principles and guidelines. Now we have begun to look at real life experiences that might hit close to home and remind you of personal hurts. As we examine forgiveness, you may start to wonder if there is one "right" way to do this. You might grow concerned that haven't approached forgiveness "correctly." Please relax, and don't let our study be a source of self-doubt. If you are feelings settled about a past experience and have God's peace about it, you need not go back and "redo" forgiveness.

Another caution: as we continue to address deep hurts, remember that many things you experience may be easily dealt with by overlooking small offenses, starting over, clarifying, or a simple apology given and granted. Review pages 4-11 through 4-13 on Ways We Respond to Hurt. We are now focusing on the more complicated situations which often result in ineffective or unhealthy responses on our part, with the goal of reaching one the final two options: Forgiveness or Learning to Live with Ambiguity.

**Remembering these cautions,** let's look further at deep hurts, especially those encountered in our families. In a January, 1995 *Christianity Today* article on forgiving and possibly reconciling with parents, a priest is quoted as saying, "...in every family, there are times when there is hurt, anger, and alienation. But we cannot run away from our family. We have only one family, so we must make every effort to be reconciled."

To a degree, this rings true. As adults, we can physically distance ourselves from an alcoholic father, from a mother who abandoned us, or from a spiteful sibling. Yet we often carry ongoing emotional baggage, and there is always a sense of unfinished business in a relationship that we wished could have been different. Reconciliation may be the goal, or that may be unwise such as in many abuse situations. We may feel reconciliation is unattainable, undesired, or beyond our capacity to negotiate. Forgiveness might be possible; a restored relationship may not. When a stranger with whom we have no ongoing relationship causes harm such as raping us or a child, running a red light while texting and causing a fatal car accident that kills a loved one, or randomly shooting a member of our family – we may actually have an easier time reaching some level of forgiveness than when the offender is well known to us. We hopefully never have to see a stranger again, so a restored relationship is not even considered a possibility. Yet not knowing the offender may still result in a vague, unapproachable adversary – or we may be able to put the traumatic event "on a shelf" after working through what has happened with God's help. We will talk more about this in a subsequent lesson.

Whether we know the offender or not, whether we have access to or a desire for any ongoing contact, the immensity and consequences of the offense can go on to haunt us UNLESS we somehow deal with them. If the person asks for forgiveness, we are faced with a choice on how to proceed. If there is no attempt to apologize, we are left with deciding how to handle our ongoing troubling memories and emotions. There are times when what has happened is so traumatic that Post Traumatic Stress becomes an issue. If you are in that situation, it is important that you get help from a professional

trained in this area rather than try to navigate your ongoing stress alone. Find a licensed professional who will respect your faith. There are licensed Christian therapists in the area who would respect your privacy and who could help you move forward. Remember, the brain is an organ that can be injured just like any other part of the body. It too may benefit from rehabilitation, rest, and sometimes medication.

If you currently have no troubling memories or broken relationships, certainly DO NOT try to create any. If you have reached peace about a situation, thank God for that and go forward. If you do have unresolved deep hurts, or as you come alongside someone else who does, there are many available "forms" which God will fill as you seek His help and peace to deal with things beyond your coping capacity. As you read His word, cry out to Him, journal, read, seek fellowship with other believers, talk with a trusted friend or counselor; He will reveal the next step.

This week, I would like you to reflect on how you have handled or are trying to handle a tough forgiveness challenge – or how you have witnessed a friend or family member cope. Look back to the Application page you filled out on our first day.

*We are to work through our heartaches, devastations, and struggles in life, but we are not to make idols of them...We can stubbornly cling to our pain and refuse to live beyond it, but God is greater than the power of our past.* (p. 103 in **Forgiving Our Fathers and Mothers** by Leslie Fields and Jill Hubbard)

**For discussion's purpose, here is the situation:**

1. **A major hurt has occurred.**
2. **Another person caused this hurt with apparent volition.** (What would be different if it was an unintentional accident?)
3. **You are left to pick up the pieces and go on with your life.**
4. **The offender asks for forgiveness, but you can't muster up the will or energy to grant**

**OR**

5. **The person doesn't ask for forgiveness, maybe doesn't even know they caused hurt**

**WHAT WILL YOU DO?**

There is a list on the next few pages of possible directions you might take. You may sense the need for a multi-level approach. Don't look at this list and feel "pressure" to pick the "right" choice. There is no one right way to deal with our forgiveness issues. Relax and ask Christ to direct you on a plan He would advise for you. Search the Scriptures for verses or examples that speak to you. Some of the options listed on the next page have already been mentioned in your earlier reading, in your small group time, or in the large group time. This list is not exhaustive. God may bring other options to your mind, and we will explore more in the coming weeks. The goal of listing them like this is to give you hope for the

possibility of change; you don't need to stay "stuck." Again, if you aren't "stuck," that is great. Just file this information away in your heart and your notes in case you need it in the future.

**1. Identify the deep hurt :**

2. Is this something you are successfully dealing with on your own strength? \_\_\_\_\_ If not, **acknowledge your weakness**, your inability to move forward, and expectantly approach God for help. Remember **Jehoshaphat**? (See page 2-4 and 2-5). Write out the last sentence of II Chronicles 20:12.

3. Remember that **God loves you, wants to help you, and is ABLE to help you.** If you doubt this, find and record verses that reassure you that

- a. He is there with you
- b. That He knows what it is like to be rejected or falsely accused
- c. That His power resides in your spirit and is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead

*Look back to earlier lessons you have completed and find verses you may have starred – or look for new verses and jot down references. Maybe copy out favorite ones on recipe cards to have accessible.*

4. Know that **God wants to hang on to your hand**, to rescue you, to heal hurts, to bring peace. Grasp on to that outreached hand.

5. Put **forms** in place that He can and will fill with substance. List some that might be particularly helpful in dealing with present hurt.

*Go back to pages 3-3 through 3-6 if you have trouble remembering examples.*

6. Find refuge in God's **protection, provision, justice**. He is the one who will judge and deal with another person's sin; you don't have to get even. Give the job of judge and jury to Him.

Read and comment on the following verses. Write out any other you want to be able to refer to readily.

- a. Colossians 3:25
- b. I Peter 3:8-11
- c. Romans 12:17-21
- d. Deuteronomy 32:35

7. If you are struggling, ask God for **someone to walk beside you** as you seek to forgive or be forgiven. This is NOT gossiping to a friend but actually asking God to impress on your mind a trustworthy, mature Christian gal who would care, support, advise, and hold you accountable. If someone would ask you to be that person for her, keeping confidentiality is crucial.

- a. Write out Galatians 6:2
- b. How did God help Paul when his stress was great? (II Corinthians 7:5-7)
- d. Read Moses' story in Exodus 17:8-13. How did God arrange to help him when he was weary?

**(Note:** Please remember that you may also need a trained professional if you are having PTSD symptoms or marked trouble in functioning. Avail yourself intervention that God has allowed people to discover. All real truth is God's truth.)



8. Ask God to help you see the offender as a broken person with human flaws and feet of clay. Consider hurts and harm they might have experienced and been compromised by. This is NOT to excuse them, but to help you discover their humanity and to see them as loved by God, impossible as it may seem. We come back to two things God wants to extend to each of us:

**Mercy**- not giving us what we deserve

**Grace** - offering us what we don't deserve – forgiveness, love, and a future

Ask God to help you see people through Jesus' eyes – even if no future relationship or reconciliation seems possible or wise. You can still be freed from the pain, bitterness, and hold the offender or experience has on you. This is a miracle of God. He can change our emotions and will – and soften our thoughts and heal our memories.

9. Remember and remind yourself of **what forgiveness is and is not**. Look back to notes you took in the first class. When God forgives you, your relationship with Him is restored. With human relationships, restoration does not necessarily occur.

Read the following excerpt from the book, **Helping People Forgive** (p. 28) by David Augsburger:

#### Toward a New Paradigm of Forgiveness

1. Accepting and forgiving are different processes. We accept persons for the good that they *are* or *do*. We forgive persons for the evil that they did or caused.
2. Excusing and forgiving are different processes. We excuse people when we no longer hold them accountable. We forgive people when we hold them accountable but do not excuse.
3. Tolerating and forgiving are different processes. We tolerate what another has done when we overlook or ignore. We forgive what we cannot tolerate, will not overlook, or ignore.
4. Forgetting and forgiving are different processes. We do not need to forgive if we can simply forget—forgetting is passive, avoidant, repressive; it denies, detaches, dismisses. We do not forget when we forgive, but the meaning of the memory changes—forgiving is active and aware; it is recognizing the injury, owning the pain, and reaching out to reframe, re-create, restore, reconstruct, rebuild, reopen what can be opened.

10. Pray for a miracle of forgiveness when there seems to be no way. Pray for a changed heart that cannot be produced by your own will power. Pray for the miracle of seeing another person through God's eyes. Read another excerpt from Augsburg's book (p, 124):

During the 1915 massacre of more than a million Armenians by the Turks, a military unit attacked a village, killing all the adults and taking the young women as hostages. An officer raided a home, shot the parents, gave the daughters to his soldiers, but kept the beautiful oldest daughter for himself. After months of captivity, servitude, and sexual abuse, she escaped and slowly rebuilt her life, ultimately completing training as a nurse.

One night while on duty in a Turkish hospital, she recognized the face of a desperately ill patient in intensive care. It was her captor and abuser, the murderer of her parents, the Turkish officer. He was comatose and required constant care if he was to survive. A long and difficult convalescence followed, with the man too ill to be aware of his surroundings.

One day, as he was returning to health, the doctor said to him, "You are a very fortunate man. Had it not been for the devotion of this nurse, you would never have made it, you would certainly be dead."

The officer looked long at the nurse. "I've wanted for days to ask you, we have met before, have we not?"

"Yes," she replied, "we have met before."

"Why didn't you kill me when you had the opportunity? Or why didn't you just let me die?"

"Because," the nurse replied, "I am a follower of one who taught, 'love your enemies'" (Wainright 1980, 434).

11. Remember that **God always has a plan B**. Over and over again the Bible records stories of even pillars of the faith, who experienced or caused great suffering. If they turned to Him, He found new ways to use them in His work. He also promised to "restore the years the locusts have eaten" (Joel 2:25) and to "bring beauty from ashes" (See Isaiah 61: 1-3). You will be strengthened and used by God when you endure suffering and seek to follow Him and allow Him to work in your life. It is never too late to make progress in a forgiveness journey, and God never gives up on any of us.

12. **Allow God to use your hurts to minister to others**. Read II Corinthians 1:3-11. Who can best minister to a person in trouble?

What have you learned that makes you uniquely qualified to minister to another person?

AA and other 12 Step Programs have recognized this. Mothers Against Drunk Driving have often experienced loss of a child through a car accident involving alcohol. Compassionate Friends and support groups for families touched by suicide or murder are led by individuals whose families have experienced these losses. America's Most Wanted program was hosted for 24 years by John Walsh, whose six year old son Adam was kidnapped and murdered in 1981. Corrie Ten Boom, whose family suffered at the hands of the Nazis, was able to reach out to other hurting people.

*"As we move forward and claim the life of Christ we are meant to embrace, we will have moments to pause. This is "normal." After all, healing is not the erasure of hurts, but the erasure of their power to control us. Forgetting is not our goal. Our past is part of our story, all of it. Moving forward is not pretending that the events of the past did not have an impact. Instead we need to "remember well"; we must relish the character we have developed as a result; and we must use it now to help others."* (p. 174 in Forgiving the Sins of Our Mothers and Fathers)

13. Examine your understanding of **suffering** in the life of a Christian. Our western culture assumes things will go well if we work hard enough. Success, health, good relationships will be ours if our faith is "strong enough". These assumptions are not biblical. Both the Old and New Testaments are full of stories the suffering of people of God. It **will** come in this world, and **God can use it in our lives**. It can be helpful to ask God to bring the perspective of suffering and loss to our deep hurts. When we perceive hurts this way, it opens avenues to handling them as grief, loss of a dream – and helps us cope EVEN IF the hurt is not removed. We can start to see what God can and will do in us through hurts or **in spite** of them.

14. Realize that you may have to **live with loose ends** until you see God face to face. The landscape of life is ever changing. Remember the words of hymns – "This world is NOT my home; I'm just a passing through," and "I'm just a poor wayfaring stranger a travelin through this world of woe." American slaves expressed awareness of this journey in the spirituals they wrote and sang. Your longings will never be fully met in this world. Ask God to help you keep eternity's perspective in view.

Read and write out II Corinthians 4:16-18. Things that threaten to overwhelm us WILL NOT last forever!

Read these verses for encouragement:

II Corinthians 4:16-18

I Peter 1:3-9

II Peter 3:10-13

**We can rejoice with expectation, even as we face tough challenges. This will NOT go on forever!**

### Conclusion

The first day we met, you were given a "Personal Application Page" (see Week One or use the additional copy that is on the next page, and continue to fill it in.)

**Personal Application**