

40 Days of LOVE

Small Group Study Notes

Week 4

Love is Forgiving

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A Test of Love

The ultimate test of love is how you respond when somebody hurts you .

Forgiveness Quiz

True or False

A person should not be forgiven until they ask for it.

Forgiveness includes minimising the offence and the pain that was caused.

Forgiveness includes restoring trust and reuniting a relationship.

You haven't really forgiven others until you have forgotten the offence.

1. Forgiveness is not _____
_____ of the offence.

Being wounded and being wronged are two different things:

- Being wounded is accidental.
- Being wronged is intentional.

2. Forgiveness is not _____
_____ without changes.

- Forgiveness is instant, but trust must be built over a long period of time.
- Forgiveness takes care of the damage done by “letting the person off the hook,” but does not guarantee the relationship will be restored.

To restore a relationship, the offender must:

- demonstrate _____
_____.
- _____ wherever possible.
- _____ over time.

If a person repeatedly wrongs you, you are obligated by God to forgive that person . But you are not obligated to trust that person, to let them continue to hurt you, or to instantly restore the relationship.

Three Steps of Forgiveness

1. I relinquish my _____

*Never avenge yourselves . Leave that to God, for he has said that he will repay those who deserve it.
(Romans 12:19 LB)*

You don't hurt the other person with your resentment -- you're only hurting yourself.

Three reasons to forgive others:

- God has _____
- Bitterness makes you _____
- You are going to need _____
in the future

*"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."
(Matthew 6:12 NKJV)*

2. I respond to evil _____

*²⁷"Do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."
(Luke 6:27 -28 NIV)*

*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
(Romans 12 :21 NIV)*

**3. I _____ as long as
necessary.**

*²¹ "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" ²² "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"
(Matthew 18:21 -22 NLT)*

*Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.
(Colossians 3:13 NLT)*

Don't try to forgive on your own power. Recognise and accept God's forgiveness of you . Then ask for his strength and power to go through you to forgive others .

Discovery Questions

1. Turn to the true/false quiz on page 2. Were you surprised that all of the answers were false? Which “false” seemed to be most “true” for you? Why?
2. Share a story of forgiveness you have witnessed, or share a story of how a person responded to evil with good. What did that mean to you? How did it make you feel?
3. Focus on the why of the next question - not who offended you or the details of what they did: Why is it so hard to forgive people who have hurt you?

Living on Purpose: Fellowship and Evangelism

Fellowship

1. What would happen to the relational life of the church if we would pray for those who hurt us, show patience toward those who offend us, refuse to gossip, and offer forgiveness?
2. How can your group help you deal with an area of unforgiveness in your life?
3. How can you encourage others in your group or in your church to forgive?

Evangelism

If a Christian has a strained relationship with an unbeliever (no matter who is at fault), how could experiencing forgiveness affect the unbeliever's openness to Jesus Christ?

Putting It into Practice: The One Person Assignment

Forgiveness is often a two-way street—we need to ask for and offer it. The following questions can be hard to ask, but they are critical to your spiritual and emotional health. Right now, ask yourself, “Who do I need to ask to forgive me?” “Who do I need to forgive?”

The First Step

Pinpoint the forgiveness issue. Do you feel anxiety, anger, or other negative emotions toward anyone? Could this be a cue that you need to release that person and work on forgiveness issues in your own life?

The Next Step

Turn to God in prayer about this person. If you’ve prayed about it before and it’s still bothering you, don’t give up. You may use the prayer on the page opposite as a model, inserting the person’s name:

The Repeated Steps

If the memory comes back and you struggle with unforgiveness again, repeat this prayer as often as you need to. Trust God in his power to help you daily. Reach out to a trusted friend or a group member to support you through this process.

Dear Lord,

I may not forget, but I'm choosing to forgive

*I realise trust may take time to rebuild,
but I choose to hold no grudges.*

Help me to let go of bitterness or anger in my heart.

*Give me your grace that I may relinquish
my "right" to get even.*

*Help me understand that you have forgiven me
and that I can forgive _____ through you.*

I trust in your power to do that.

Now, Lord, I ask you to bless _____

In particular,

I ask you to bless them with these things:

God,

please replace my hurt with your healing.

Replace my pain with your peace.

Replace my loss with your love.

May the past truly be past.

In Jesus' name I pray, amen.