
[SERMON NOTES]

“SORRY!” – Forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35, Matthew 5:43-44, Luke 23:34)

Forgiveness is choosing to end the cycle of _____ and instead recycle it as _____.

There are no limits on _____ in the Kingdom of God.

As we are _____, we are meant to _____ others.

Unforgiveness _____ but forgiveness _____.

Whatever _____ we do not allow God to _____ we will _____ to others.

Forgiveness isn't always _____.

Forgiveness isn't a _____.

Forgiveness is ultimately learning to _____ your _____.

Forgiveness ultimately _____ us to be able to _____.

The only way we are called to see others is through _____.

If you want to know if forgiveness is real, you have to _____ it.

[QUICK REVIEW]

Looking at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or something that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

[MY STORY]

Some of the most inspiring stories that we read or watch or experience are redemption stories—stories of reconciliation and restoration of relationships after significant rifts or trauma. ***What is the most inspiring story of forgiveness that you have experienced personally or that has been shared with you in your life.***

[DIGGING DEEPER]

Read the famous passage on love from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. List out the characteristics of love below. In what ways are they incompatible with an unforgiving heart?

Though we mostly talked about forgiving others in the message this week, there are plenty of other dimensions to forgiving. There are at least four. They are:

1. Forgiving **others** for the ways they've hurt us
2. Forgiving **ourselves** for our own failings
3. Forgiving **life** for being unfair
4. Forgiving **God** for not saving us the way we think he should have or for being seemingly indifferent to our pain**

Which one of these four above dimensions do you struggle with the most?

***It should be said that this doesn't mean that God has actually done us wrong, but the feelings of bitterness and anger toward Him may still be present and so in some sense we must choose to let that go.*

The sermon this week talked about how learning to love our enemies is central to practicing forgiveness. **Read the following passages about how we are supposed to love enemies.**

Luke 6:27-36

Romans 12:14-21

Luke 23:26-43

Matthew 5:43-48

What do these passages tell us about God's posture towards sinners and enemies?

Desmond Tutu was a Christian leader during after after the crisis of apartheid in South Africa, a violent period of division and killing that lasted for over 40 years. He became the leader of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that began to pursue forgiveness and reconciliation among people who had killed or wronged individuals and families on either side of the conflict. His work literally involved killers being forgiven by the families of those whose loved ones they had slain. He famously said, **"Without forgiveness, there is no future."** Below are the steps to his **Fourfold Path of Healing** to practice forgiveness. **In your group or on your own (i.e. in a journal, etc.), as you feel led, intentionally walk through each of these steps in a specific relationship you desire to pursue forgiveness in.** (*with deep wounds, professional counseling may be necessary*)

- 1) **Tell the Story:** Our stories define and shape us and give us meaning and dignity. Tell the story of how you were wronged or hurt in a specific relationship or experience.
- 2) **Name the Hurt:** Choose to name the depths of the harm and pain that you have experienced. What pain isn't brought to the surface to be transformed will be transferred elsewhere over time.
- 3) **Grant Forgiveness:** Intentionally enter into the practice of forgiveness. Perhaps start by writing a letter or journaling this, or, if you are ready, go straight to the person who hurt you and forgive.
- 4) **Renew or Release the Relationship:** Reconciliation is a possibility after forgiveness occurs. Sometimes you and the other person can work toward a renewed relationship, though sometimes it is unwise. With your trusted community or counselor, discern the next steps of renewing or releasing the relationship.

*If this was helpful, check out Desmond's book, **The Book of Forgiving**, which goes into much more detail on each step and tells incredible stories of forgiveness and reconciliation in South Africa after apartheid.*

[WEEKLY READINGS]

Studies say that someone who reads their Bible 4 times or more a week improves their joy, happiness, contentment, and overall approval of their life. (*1 Tim. 4:8-10,16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17*). As a church, we believe that! Below are 4 passages of Scripture this week to dive into to pull deeper on our weekend's message. We encourage you to take notes in your Bible, and ask yourself: *What does this teach me about God? Myself and others? And how do I follow Jesus better?*

2 Corinthians 5

Ephesians 4

Psalms 103

Colossians 3