



Life Is Complicated. We Can Help.

Forgiveness

#nplifeiscomplicated

Week 12

November 29, 2020

Bottom Line: Forgiveness is freedom.

Icebreaker: Do you have a favorite Bible story, movie, book, or personal story about forgiveness? Share.

Key Verse: *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor [perpetual animosity, resentment, strife, fault-finding] and slander be put away from you, along with every kind of malice [all spitefulness, verbal abuse, malevolence]. Be kind and helpful to one another, tender-hearted [compassionate, understanding], forgiving one another [readily and freely], just as God in Christ also forgave you.* Ephesians 4:31-32 AMP

Forgiveness is like a breath of fresh air. You must inhale it and receive it and also exhale it as you give it. As we grow in maturity, we forgive more quickly and freely. Our readiness to forgive will draw others to us. We will be known as a safe place to fail. No matter how much we are required to forgive others, it pales in comparison to what God has forgiven in relationship to us. When we don't forgive, we have bitterness, anger, and all kinds of negative attitudes. Paul is clear that as Jesus-followers, we have to get rid of it. We generally feel like it's an unjust and unachievable requirement. But Paul, writing from a Roman prison where he had been unjustly imprisoned, along with many other abuses, said it is possible to get over it and through it. He shows how to give grace and live in an unending stream of forgiveness. Walking with Jesus through our woundedness teaches us very real and workable truth. **Forgiveness is not conditional.** It is not based on the other person's response, not earned, or deserved. **Forgiveness doesn't mean this didn't happen. It's not denial.** It DID happen, and it was painful. But you will not hold it against them forever. You still have memories, pain. The consequences of other's actions still may last. But forgiveness isn't an emotion. It's a choice. **Forgiveness is not resuming the relationship.** Forgiveness and restoring the relationship are two different things. Forgiveness is instant. Trust must be built over a long period of time. Forgiveness is your part in reconciliation. But for a relationship to be restored, the offender has to do three other things that are unrelated to forgiveness: Demonstrate genuine repentance. Make restitution whenever possible. Rebuild trust by proving he or she has changed over time. **Forgiveness is divine.** The power to forgive is part of the nature of God. When you exercise it, you rise above the limitations of your human nature. Choosing to forgive is one of the hardest things most people ever do. As we take on Jesus' nature, one of the traits is a readiness to forgive others.

THINK IT OVER >>>

Bitterness will not only rob you of the joy of the present but will also steal from you all the promises of tomorrow. When we refuse to forgive because we do not want to let those who have hurt us move on to a fresh future, we sacrifice our own future in the process. Reflect and discuss. How have you experienced this?

To receive the grace of God and yet treat others ungraciously is an act of wickedness. Can you think of Scriptures that support this statement? How does The Lord's Prayer weigh in on this?

How does bitterness lead to malice and slander?

Don't let what has happened to you in the past control what happens in the present. Do you have any area of life where that has happened? How did you stop the process?

LOOK IT OVER <<<

What kinds of conditions do we tend to put on forgiveness?

It seems forgiveness would be easier if it would erase the memories and the consequences. Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of the sin against you without bitterness and grudges. What biblical examples show us how? Do you know anyone today who has shown you that?

What does repentance and restitution mean? Why are they and also rebuilding trust important to restoring relationships?

When Jesus proved who He was, He showed His scars. We want to show our successes. Why are we afraid of our scars?

We are never more like God than when we forgive. It is the greatest way we show God to others. How have you experienced offering or receiving forgiveness?

NEXT STEPS

1. Ask God to help you look at your heart and see where forgiveness is needed.
2. Take the next step Paul recommends for you. Find a way to be kind and helpful to someone who has hurt you.
3. Post Ephesians 4:31-32 somewhere you will regularly see it.

EVALUATION/ACTION

Realizing and reaching your full potential in Christ

Bottom Line: Forgiveness is freedom.

Rate yourself from 1 to 10 1 (never), 10 (always)	1	2	3	4		6	7	8	9	10
Why did you give yourself this rating?										
What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating?										
Do you know someone who demonstrates this bottom line well? What do you admire about that person?										
What specific action can you put into practice to raise your rating?										
At the end of this week, reflect - where did you see the bottom line show up in your actions throughout the week?										

PRAYER

List group members and their prayer requests for this week:

DAILY STUDY

Want to dig deeper? Check out **The Daily** this week at newpointe.org/daily:

Monday: Colossians 3:13

Tuesday: Proverbs 17:9

Wednesday: Luke 23:33-34

Thursday: Mark 11:25

Friday: Matthew 18:21-22

Don't let the conversation stop here. Keep talking it over with others throughout the week.

(Don't forget to bring this paper to your next small group meeting)