GROUP GUIDE

Forgiveness

The gospel in forgiveness 1/22/2023

Matthew 6:12-15; Heb 12:15-16

MAIN POINT

By forgiving others, Christians demonstrate the forgiveness, grace and love of God.

Chuck Martin will cover: *The cost of unforgiveness. (Matt 6:9-15, Matt 18:21-35, Ephesians 4:25-32, Heb 12:15-16,)*

We often forget that forgiveness is God’s gift to us. When we choose to let go of the offense and release the offender, we free ourselves from having to sit in the seat of judge. One of my favorite descriptions of forgiveness is that forgiveness is the choice to release the captive, only to discover that the captive was me. By choosing to forgive, we avoid ingesting the toxic poison of bitterness. When we withhold forgiveness, we often forget the original source of our anger and resentment. We carry the bitterness with us and unintentionally pollute our present and future relationships.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What did you hear in today's message that left an impression?

When you think about forgiveness, is there a particular person who comes to mind? Why that person?

Do you think most people in the world truly understand forgiveness? Why or why not?

What kinds of things hold us back from truly receiving and giving forgiveness?

What has unforgiveness cost you (if anything)?

Forgiveness in the kingdom of God is a give and take proposition. We forgive others because we have been forgiven by God. In fact, our willingness to forgive others is directly related to our understanding of just how much God has forgiven us. When Jesus told us to forgive others, He emphasized the relationship between the forgiveness we give with the forgiveness we’ve been given. His parable of the unforgiving slave helps us see that when Christians forgive, we demonstrate the forgiveness, grace, and love of God.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Ask a Volunteer to READ MATTHEW 6:12-15.

Why do you think Jesus chose forgiveness as the only subject in the Lord’s Prayer where He emphasized people’s actions?

According to Jesus, what is the true motivation for forgiveness? How is that different from most people’s motivation to forgive?

Why is it so important for us to practice forgiveness? Why is it so difficult?

Jesus emphasized forgiveness because it, above all else, shows that a person understands what God has done. Jesus emphasized our inability to pay for sins ourselves in a parable later in Matthew.

Ask a Volunteer to READ Hebrews 12:14-17

What causes bitterness?

What are some warnings that you have been grateful for? Why?

What wrong attitude should we watch out for? (12:15)

What did Esau do that is described as godless? (12:16)

What did Esau’s godless behavior cost him? (12:17) [1]

Identify the writer’s specific instructions in verses 14-17. What principles are they based on?

Fixing your eyes on Jesus, confess your sins. Ask him for the determination to keep following him, regardless of the cost. [2]

*[1] WORDsearch. (n.d.). Adult Questions for LESSONmaker. WORDsearch.*

*[2] Reapsome, J. (2001). Hebrews: Race to Glory: 13 Studies for Individuals or Groups: With Notes for Leaders (pp. 42â€“44). IVP Connect: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press.*

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

When is the last time you felt in awe of the forgiveness God has shown? How can you make that a regular part of your life?

Is there anyone in your life that you need to forgive right now? What is keeping you from giving forgiveness?

Do you think forgiveness is easier the first time or the 100th time? Why?

What is one practical way our group can show God’s grace to our community?

What roadblocks make it difficult for you to pursue holiness?

How would you counsel a friend who was extremely bitter?

What does it mean to live at peace with everyone?

What bitter or unforgiving attitudes do you need to confess today?

What practical steps can you take this week to avoid becoming bitter toward someone who has hurt you?

What actions do you need to take today so that you can truly say you have made every effort to live in peace with everyone? [1]

Memorize Psalm 27:1 THIS WEEK

PRAYER

Close in prayer. Ask God to open your eyes to beauty of His forgiveness again. Thank God that at the right time, Christ came to bring forgiveness. Pray that God would help your group become like Him as you forgive others.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 6:12

6:12. We also are to ask for forgiveness. Debts are sins viewed as obligations to the Father. The Greek grammar indicates that the disciple prays for forgiveness from God only after having first expressed forgiveness to others. We dare not take lightly the rest of the verse: as we also have forgiven our debtors (see also vv. 14-15). At least two biblical teachings about salvation seem in conflict with the words forgive us . . . as we also have forgiven (v. 12; see also vv. 14-15; 18:21-35). (1) Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-10). That rules out earning forgiveness by forgiving. (2) Faith in Christ brings forgiveness and eternal security (John 10:27-29).

Matthew 18:21-35

18:21-22. Peter spoke for the Twelve. His question could easily have sprung out of Jesus’ teaching on church discipline (18:15-20). Peter may have wondered how long he should forgive his sinning brother before casting him out of the church, especially when the sin was against him personally. According to some Jewish tradition, a brother was forgiven three times for the same offense. The fourth offense, however, need not be forgiven, because it would be evidence that the brother had not repented. Peter thought he was being generous in forgiving up to seven times.

18:23-25. Therefore was Jesus’ way of introducing the parable to illustrate the principle he stated in 18:22. The king represents God, and the servants represent fellow believers. It was not uncommon for servants and indebted free men to be sold as slaves to cover debts they could not pay (Lev. 25:39; 2 Kings. 4:1). In Israel, these slaves were freed every fiftieth year, in the year of Jubilee, in accordance with the Mosaic Law. No slave, could ever hope to repay this amount in a thousand lifetimes.

18:26. The servant fell on his knees before him (8:2; 9:18; 15:25), displaying humility and desperation and casting himself on the mercy of the master. The servant’s plea for patience and his promise to pay back everything were so unrealistic that they could only be the words of a desperate man.

18:27. The servant’s master felt his heart going out to the man. He took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. The servant was undeserving, but the king acted with mercy (withholding punishment that was deserved) and grace (giving a great gift that was not deserved). So it should be among brothers and sisters in God’s family.

18:28. The word but contrasts the first servant and his relationship with a second servant. The two were alike in only one way, the debt each owed gave the creditor power. The servant had not understood family principles. But he was about to learn.

The amount the second servant owed the first was insignificant when compared with the debt the first servant had just been forgiven. One hundred denarii was one hundred day’s wages. The first servant had owed more than half a million times as much to the king! Rather than imitating the mercy of the king, the first servant mistreated the second servant.

18:29-30. The actions and words of the second servant were almost identical to those of the first servant in 18:26. This servant also fell to his knees in humility, asking for patience and offering to repay the debt. But the first servant refused to give the second servant a chance to repay the debt.

18:31. The other servants of the household recognized the cruelty of the first servant toward the second. This grieved them deeply. These servants reported the matter to the king.

18:32-33. The angry king held one more audience with the first servant, this time to bring him to account for failing to follow the merciful king’s example.

18:34-35. The king was so angry at the first servant’s mistreatment of the second that he rescinded his previous order to release the first servant and forgive his debt. He imprisoned the servant and turned him over to the jailers to be tortured.