

Genesis 45:1-20

Forgiving What You Can't Forget

PART 2

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Alfred
Street

Sunday, February 10, 2019

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley

Sermon Title: Forgiving What You Can't
Forget Part 2

Scripture: Genesis 45:1-20



CURRICULUM
GUIDE



Sermon Summary

True forgiveness does not mean that you have to act like you have forgotten what someone did. True forgiveness does not mean excusing the offense. True forgiveness does not mean that you act like the offense didn't hurt you. True forgiveness does not mean that you let the offender get the best of you. True forgiveness requires an authenticity of acknowledging the hurt and acknowledging the wrong because you cannot forgive what you are lying to yourself about. So what does real forgiveness look like? Using the life of Joseph, Pastor Wesley admonishes that forgiveness is not a feeling. It is a list of some deliberate decisions you make on how to handle the offense that came your way.

Key Points

- 1) Don't recall or repeat their offenses to other people
- 2) Don't seek revenge or resent their blessings
- 3) Don't rewind their offense or replay your emotions
- 4) Release them from worry and remember your story differently

Notes for Facilitators:

Remember to discuss a question from each section, but don't feel pressure to discuss every question. We recommend activity number 4 or activity number 1 as a great opening exercise for the week. If your Village does activity 1, please take pictures of your Villages' forgiveness acrostics and share them with us. We may feature these images in future promotions for Village groups.

Getting To Know You Questions:

1. How do you handle hurt? Think of a time someone hurt you. What was your reaction and response to that person when you first saw them after they'd hurt you?
2. Pair up with a neighbor and share one of the following: something for which you would like forgiveness, or something for which you need to forgive someone.



Into The Bible Questions:

One of the very first examples of forgiveness in the Bible is the story of Joseph and his brothers. As you recall, Joseph's brothers were jealous of him, so jealous that they came up with a plan to sell him into slavery. Years later when Joseph had an opportunity to seek revenge, he instead forgave them with deep love and affection (Genesis 45:1-15). Like Joseph, our feelings can either work for or against us. We can take charge of them or we can allow the destructive feelings associated with hurt and pain make us slaves to bitterness and revenge. What practices can we incorporate in our daily lives to let go of anger and resentment and usher towards God's glorious future for us?

Life Application Questions:

1. As you reflect on this message, why do you think forgiveness is not easy? What is a piece of advice that you would provide to someone that is struggling with forgiveness?
2. Do you willingly and easily pray for those who hurt you? If not, what holds you back from doing so?
3. Paul Laurence Dunbar's quote "we wear the mask" illustrates how people sometimes feign happiness while internally they are "tortured" by pain. How does not honestly dealing with offensive moments prevent us from reaching providential movements?
4. This sermon suggests that a key to forgiveness is to remember the painful event differently, by inserting "but God..." into your recollection. For example, in Joseph's life, he was sold into slavery, falsely accused and jailed; but God later chose Joseph for a position of leadership. What hurtful memory may you reframe by seeing how God fortified and sustained you through that painful season?

"Can I Push It?"

1. Pastor Wesley stated the following "If I remember the offense and still get upset, does that mean I haven't forgiven? What does forgiveness look like?"
2. We hear the phrase, "hurt people hurt people" often and it's seemingly used as a tagline to explain or justify toxic behavior. What are your thoughts on this phrase, what does it mean to you and do you believe it? Do you believe if you pray for a hurt person they won't continue to hurt others?
3. Pastor Wesley said, "you must make peace with the fact your offender may not reap what they sow!" How does this make you feel? Do you find that you willingly forgive because you believe that the offender will get what's coming to them?



4. Pastor Wesley mentioned that God judges both what the offender did as well as your response, when an offense occurs. As human beings, we have often been on both ends of this scenario. How do you honor God with your actions once an offense has occurred?

Spirit Work:

1. The struggle to forgive ourselves or others can feel like a huge weight. Take the time to think long and hard about someone you are struggling to forgive. Draft a letter that expresses your thoughts and feelings regarding the offender. Once the letter is complete you can make a personal decision to give the letter to the person or put it aside. Remember, it's important to pray for those that offend you.
2. Sometimes we struggle with forgiveness because of who hurt us. One of the hardest types of offenses to forgive is from our parents. If you are struggling to forgive a parent, take time to see things from his/her perspective. Using journaling, step into your parents' shoes and answer the following questions: what type of childhood do you think your parent may have had? What made them hurt, scared, etc? Who taught them to be a parent? What was their life like? Use this information as a lens for how you interpret their offense.
3. Sometimes forgiveness is only made possible when we see the offense from different perspectives. Using journaling, write the scene where an offense occurred from three perspectives (points of view). First, write the scene from your perspective. Second, write



the scene from the perspective of the offender. Third, write the scene from the perspective of a bystander, with no vested interest in either party. Compare the stories. What did you learn?

Activity:

1. Give each village member a sheet of paper or sticky note. Have them write the word “forgiveness” in an acrostic. Next write words that begin with each letter of the acrostic that have to do with forgiveness. After everyone is finished ask a few members to share what they came up with.

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2. Forgiveness Recipe: Encourage your Villagers to think about what they need to forgive by asking them to create forgiveness recipes. Provide index cards or sticky notes to write “forgiveness recipes.” These recipes may include things like “2 cups of understanding” and “a pinch of compassion.” Advise your Villagers to work individually or in pairs to complete the exercise. Encourage Villagers to keep these newly created recipes with them or stow them away so they can be reviewed as a reminder of how to forgive others.
3. Praying for the Offender: In pairs, create a prayer template that you can use for those who offend you. Remember, Pastor shares that you must pray for your offender, not about them. You must accept that they may never receive punishment for their offense and God may bless them anyway.

4. Voting with Your Feet:

- a. Facilitator, designate two sides of the room. One side will be yes and one side will be no. If there is no room for people to stand in two groups, you can have people just raise their hands.
- b. Have everyone stand in the middle of the room.
- c. Read off the first prompt. (Note: please read the prompts in the order they are listed because they increase in difficulty. Please try to do the first two questions if you are running short on time before doing any question past number four).
- d. Direct people to go to the side of the room that best states their answer (yes/no) to the question.
- e. They cannot stay in the middle. So, reiterate that they should go to the answer that is closest to their answer.
- f. Allow a few people to share any thoughts, revelations per answer. No more than 2 minutes per question depending on your time. To keep the environment safe and free-flowing, no one should be allowed to respond to anyone who shares.
- g. This is not a debate. So, no one should feel pressured to defend their answer.
- h. Go as many rounds as possible.
- i. At the end, ask people to share any thoughts, observations, or revelations.

Questions

1. You have told a lie that left no one injured (aka a white lie).
2. You have let someone take the blame for something you did but it wasn't that big of a deal. For example, stealing the last cookie or leaving a carton of milk empty.
3. You spoiled a surprise by sharing a secret.
4. You did something to someone without them knowing and/or without taking responsibility. For example, stealing from someone's desk or hitting someone's car without waiting or leaving a note.
5. You have been hurt to the point where you can't talk about it.
6. You are waiting on someone to ask for your forgiveness.
7. You have hurt someone knowingly and you don't know how to apologize or ask for forgiveness.
8. You have hurt someone knowingly and you refuse to apologize or ask for forgiveness.
9. You can't forgive yourself for something you have done.

Additional Questions for Married Couples Village:

1. What are the areas of your marriage needing forgiveness, prayer and intentionality today? Ask God to give you a revelation of the area(s) of your marriage God wants to develop.
2. Humility is the key to unity. Rather than repeating the same patterns, in what area(s) of your marriage do you need to humble yourselves to seek or grant forgiveness?
3. It can be extremely difficult to forgive those who hurt your spouse, even when they have forgiven the person. Think of a time when you experienced this. How did it change your own interactions with the offender? If your spouse was able to forgive, were you able to readily forgive as well?

Additional Questions for Young Adult Village:

1. "Holding a grudge doesn't make you strong; it makes you bitter. Forgiving doesn't make you weak; it sets you free" As it relates to the sermonic series by Pastor Wesley, what does this saying mean to you? Do you typically find yourself holding grudges against friends and/or siblings? Are you able to easily forgive and do you find it freeing?
2. This sermon suggests that replaying past offenses holds us hostage to negativity. What past hurt are you secretly holding on to? How can you pray that God would help you to move past this offense?

Additional Questions for Parents with Children under 10:

1. Often when parenting young children, parents find themselves under the scrutiny of others regarding parenting approaches and discipline. In what ways have you suffered a slight or offense regarding your competence as a parent? How may you seek God's guidance in dealing with these challenges?
2. Our children are sometimes subjected to unkind treatment by teachers or other children. What is your reaction when you realize your child has been mistreated? How do you surrender your concern for your child to God?

Additional Questions for Women's Village:

1. Think about a time when you were hurt by another girl or woman. How did God help you to withstand that difficult time?
2. How do you respond when a friend approaches you to rehash and replay a painful event? How might you support your friend, while also sharing with them the benefit of forgiveness? How might you pray for that friend?