

Acts 15:36-40

# Forgiving What You Can't Forget

PART 1

Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley

Sunday, February 3, 2019

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley

Sermon Title: Forgiving What You Can't  
Forget Part 1

Scripture: Acts 15:36-40



CURRICULUM  
GUIDE





## Sermon Summary

In this four-part series, Pastor Wesley provides an in-depth look at Biblical forgiveness. He reminds us that offense is inevitable. In fact, offense and being wounded is one of the most productive tools that the devil has to destroy relationships with others and your relationship with the Lord. Holding on to past hurt is one of the most unproductive things a person can do in life. This series seeks to help believers learn to live above offense and to develop hearts that are forgiving. In Part 1, Pastor Wesley uses the story of Paul, Barnabas and John Mark, found in Acts 15:36-40, to outline the major characteristics of Biblical forgiveness.

## Key Points

- 1) Forgiveness does not mandate reconciliation/Reconciliation cannot be rushed.
- 2) An unforgiving heart will cause you to lose other productive relationships/Makes you an unattractive person.
- 3) An unforgiving heart is also an ungrateful heart.

# Notes for Facilitators:

For the next two weeks we'll be discussing the sermon series "Forgiving What You Can't Forget," but we understand that the sermon on Sunday, "Surviving Lot," may have brought up feelings for people in their village groups and facilitators may feel compelled to discuss these feelings or thoughts. This would be a great time to bring up resources in our church like Agape and our counseling office. Please remember to email [village@alfredstreet.org](mailto:village@alfredstreet.org) to get connected to any of our resources.

## Getting To Know You Questions:

1. Think of a time when you were hurt by someone and didn't forgive them. How did holding on to the offense impact your life?
2. Think of a time when you were the offender in a situation with someone close to you. Did you give them the space and time necessary to heal? If the relationship couldn't be fully reconciled, how did you handle that new reality?
3. What did you first learn about forgiveness? What were your first examples, readings, stories, etc. that helped you form your own definition of forgiveness?





# Into The Bible Questions:

1. How do you differentiate those who are God ordained in your life, and those who you've allowed in your life? What are distinguishing factors that allow you to appropriately categorize someone? Have you had an experience in church that offended you more deeply because you believed that interaction with church members would be different from interactions with those outside of the church? How were you able to process that experience?
2. After one city and one issue, John Mark quits. Are there ever times where you should have given the person who wronged you another chance? Have you ever called it quits too soon?
3. What did you learn from this sermon that helps you discern whether or not you are called to reconcile a relationship?
4. When you look back on previous relationships, are there any relationships where you can see how God orchestrated an offense?
5. How can we keep ourselves from being resentful of the success others achieve after our broken relationships?

# Life Application Questions:

1. In Matthew 18:21-22 Peter and Jesus speak of how many times you should forgive your brother and/or sister's sins. "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." What does this scripture mean to you?
2. One Bible footnote for Acts 15:39 says that "in the sovereignty of God, this disagreement caused a doubling of their labor." How have you seen God break something apart in your life just to multiply the blessings on the other side?
3. Paul and Barnabas accomplished so much together but in Acts 15:39, the Bible says that "there arose a sharp disagreement so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and departed." After separating, they both had success. Could we be trying to keep some people in our lives as a crutch? Could some of the relationships in our lives prevent us from taking risks and doing greater works because they make us feel safe? Is it possible for God to disrupt relationships because we've become complacent?
4. Pastor briefly references Luke 23:34 where Jesus, on the cross, says "forgive them for they know not what they do." Have you ever offended someone and not grasped how deeply you hurt them or how significant your offense was at the time? How have you dealt with your role as an offender, and how have you made progress forgiving yourself?



## "Can I Push It?"

1. When does your desire to have someone in your life conflict with God's desires for you? What makes us wrestle with God to keep people in our lives even when God is signaling that it is time for us to part ways?
2. Barnabas—whose name means "the son of consolation" (Acts 4:36)—remained committed to John Mark, even though it cost Barnabas his place as a valued member of Paul's ministry team. Have you ever had a Barnabas moment, where you were stuck between a Paul and a John Mark? Did you pick a side? Whose side did you pick? And why?

## Spirit Work:

1. Acts 13:1-3 states that while the church in Antioch was fasting and worshiping, the Holy Spirit set aside Barnabas and Paul for their mission. Alfred Street recently completed a season of fasting to discern God's will in 2019. Reflect on what God has revealed to you not only as your next mission or task, but also who is ordained to assist in that task. If there is something specific that needs to be carried out, pray for clear discernment on the next steps.
2. Spring Cleaning: There is a popular Netflix show by Marie Kondo called Tidying Up. In this series Marie talks about how tidying can transform our lives. Pastor talks about two categories of people in our life: (1) Those who God has assigned and (2) Those who we have allowed in. Think through your family, friends, colleagues, and others in your life. Who might be in that second category and what steps can you take to reduce their influence and tidy up your phone books, social media pages, and guest lists so that you can focus more on those who God has assigned.





## Activity:

Facilitators will give each group member two sticky notes.

Instruct each member to “write down the name of someone/people you need to forgive on one sticky note.”

On the second sticky note ask each member to “think of the many things you’ve done for which God forgave you.”

When we realize the many times God has forgiven us for the wrongs we’ve done, it’s easier to show mercy to those who have hurt us. Spend the last 5 minutes of Village lifting a special prayer of forgiveness over the names that were written on the sticky notes.

### **Additional Questions for Married Couples Villages:**

1. How easy is it for you to extend grace to your spouse when they hurt or offend you and seek forgiveness? Conversely, how easy is it to be granted forgiveness?
2. As married couples, we know forgiveness is critical to the health and sustainability of our marriages. What are some keys to forgiving your spouse so that you can move past offense successfully?
3. Has there been an instance where not letting go from an offense prior to your marriage has impacted your marriage? What are the keys to navigating prior pain in your marriage?

### **Additional Questions for Young Adults Villages:**

1. As a parent of a young child(ren), in what ways do you find it easiest or most difficult to teach your family about what forgiveness means and how to reconcile with their friends?
2. As God is walking your child through physical development and continuing to work on your spiritual development, how easy do you find yourself able to ask forgiveness from God or your child in those moments where you may have yelled, made a mistake, lacked patience, forgot to give lunch money or even failed to make it to school on time for pickup or an extracurricular activity? Do you freely extend grace to yourself?

3. Many households deal with some sort of sibling rivalry and friends that one sibling may not care for, which could be similar to the story of how God called Paul and Barnabas, but they added John Mark. As a parent, how do you handle sibling rivalry when friends are “added” to the mix?
4. As parents, sometimes our young children hurt us both intentionally and unintentionally. How do we learn how to forgive our kids from their offense while we’re pouring so much energy in their lives?
5. Have you carried past pain that you’ve experienced as a child into your relationship as a parent with your own child?

**Additional Questions for Women’s Villages:**

1. We can sometimes get into our feelings and emotions when we feel wronged—why do you feel we may be more content in wallowing in self-pity when the ability to forgive and move forward is an option?
2. What characteristics in your life indicate you may not have forgiven past hurts despite knowing what you need to do to move forward?
3. How can extending forgiveness heal a relationship, the offender and you?