

If Only... Living Life With No Regrets (print edition).

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Session Two

Forgiveness Matters

Jesus performs miracles. He created the universe, walked on water, made blind people see, told paralyzed people to walk, and even raised people from the dead. But in Luke 17:1, Jesus says something *is* impossible: It's impossible for people to go through life without ever getting offended.

The word translated as offenses in this verse is the Greek word "skandalon." It means a trap, a snare, an impediment causing one to fall, or a stumbling block. On the road of life, no one is exempt from being tripped up by painful things. Offenses come to us all at some point in our lives, but we don't have to live offended.

Offense is a snare the enemy uses to keep us living in a cycle of pain and regret. If we allow offense to chain us to the pain of our past, it will leave us with nothing but bitterness and shattered relationships.

The good news is, God has better plans for us. While it may be impossible for us to escape some pain in life, it is possible for us to live free from the trap of offense by embracing forgiveness. When we learn to walk in forgiveness, we can focus on the plans God has for us in the future and finally let go of the hurts of our past.

We can choose
to extend
forgiveness
toward those who
have hurt us.

CHECKING IN

The number-one thing that destroys our current relationships and keeps us trapped in a cycle of regret and dysfunction is unforgiveness. Holding on to offense keeps us bound to the hurt, betrayal, and pain we may have experienced. It keeps us focused on the past. If we don't learn to protect our hearts properly, we can become tormented by what others have done and let bitterness destroy our lives.

We can't underestimate how much unforgiveness affects us—mentally, emotionally, spiritually, relationally, and even physically. No matter what others may have done to us, we must refuse to let offense trap us and keep us from moving forward in God's plan.

We can choose to extend forgiveness toward those who have hurt us. We can reverse the hurt and release ourselves from the trap of offense as we extend the same grace and mercy toward others Christ has given to us.

Get started with these questions:

- Do you think most people find it easy to forgive? Why or why not?
- How did God speak to you from this *If Only* journey this past week?

Memorize this verse:

Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.

Hebrews 12:15



Up Next

Watch The Lesson

Use the next page for notes to write your thoughts, questions, and things you want to remember from the teaching. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions in the lesson, then discuss among your group. Remember to try to share the responsibilities of leading the discussion each week.

WATCH THE LESSON

"...It is impossible that no offenses should come..."

Luke 17:1

**Offense (Greek: skandalon): a _____ ,
a snare, an impediment causing one to fall,
or _____ block.**

- Acknowledge that you have been hurt and have not extended forgiveness toward the person who hurt you.
- Ask God to help you completely forgive and release them into God's care.

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

Hebrews 12:14-15

Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you? And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

Matthew 18:33-35

...“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”...

Luke 23:34b

- Christ had the grace to forgive you for every mistake you’ve made and all the pain you’ve caused. Through Christ, you can extend that same forgiveness to others.

How do I experience a fresh start in my relationships?

1. Acknowledge the _____ .

- Acknowledge you have been hurt and have not extended forgiveness toward the person who hurt you.
- Ask God to help you completely forgive and release them into God’s care.

2. Meditate on _____ .

- We do not have the right to hold anything against anyone. God commands us to forgive.
- The measure we use to release others from their sins against us is the same measure God uses to release us from our sins. God is serious about forgiveness.

3. _____ forgiveness.

- Whenever a memory of an individual who has hurt you pops into your mind, immediately choose to say, "I forgive that person, and I put them into God's hands."
- Forgiveness is an act of faith. When we do our part in seeking to forgive, God does His part to enable us to forgive.

4. _____ .

- If possible, attempt to reconcile broken relationships with a clean heart and a spirit that is free from offense.
- It is impossible to experience a fresh start in a relationship when you harbor unforgiveness. The only possibility for a new beginning lies in the seed of forgiveness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you have learned from the weekend message and the small group study. Then think about practical steps you can take to live out what you've learned.

Read Hebrews 12:14–15

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.

- Do you think most people believe forgiveness matters? Why or why not?
- In Hebrews 12:14-15 we are told to pursue peace with all people. Do you know anyone who tries to live this way? Share how they pursue peace with all people.
- Do you think disagreements happen even in healthy relationships? Why or why not? How can we pursue peace when we disagree?

Read Luke 23:34

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do..."

- Not everyone who hurts us does so intentionally. Do you think it is easier to forgive someone who has hurt us accidentally versus someone who has wronged us purposefully? Why?
- Is there someone who comes to mind that you need to forgive and pursue peace in that relationship? How can you take steps toward this?
- What is your main takeaway from our group discussion today? What is God asking you to do as a result?

PRAYER AND PRAISE

Give each person an opportunity to share prayer requests and praise reports. Write your personal prayer requests and make notes of how you can pray for each other.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports

DIVING DEEPER

Take some time between now and the next meeting to dig into God's Word.

In this week's lesson, we learned our relationships can become a minefield of regret if we don't learn how to communicate, connect, and—most importantly—forgive. Learning to forgive and be forgiven is critical to all our relationships. As you study these scriptures about forgiveness, commit to leave offense in the past and move forward with a heart free of bitterness.

“Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So my heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

Matthew 18:32–35

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Matthew 6:14–15

And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Luke 23:33–34

"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you."

Luke 6:27–28

Questions

- What do these verses teach you about the priority God places on forgiveness?
- In Matthew 18:32-35 and Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus said His Father would not forgive us if we do not forgive others. Have you considered the consequences of unforgiveness? Does this influence your willingness to forgive?
- Jesus not only forgave those who crucified Him, but He forgave and blessed all of mankind with His unconditional love and mercy. He died on a cross so that all could be saved from sin. This is an inspiring truth. Who can you choose to forgive and pray for this week?

**Pursue peace
with all people...**

Hebrews 12:14

DAILY DEVOTIONS

You will need two items—a pen and this guide—to hear from God through these daily devotions!

What is God saying to you?

Open to your reading for the day. Take your time reading both the scriptures and devotional. Write out what you are hearing from the Bible under the first question, *What is God saying to you?*

What does it mean to you?

What do you think God is saying to you in this scripture and devotional? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you. Write this out under the second question, *What does it mean to you?*

What action steps do you need to take?

Personalize what you have read by asking yourself how it applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, a new promise, or correction for a particular area of your life. Write how this truth applies to you today in the third question, *What action steps do you need to take?*

Bring it to God in prayer.

This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this scripture or even a prayer for a great insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say! Now, write it out in the space titled, *Bring it to God in prayer.*

Day 1

Scripture

“Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.”

Luke 6:28

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

Romans 2:4

Reflect

The greatest example of forgiveness in action is Jesus Christ. Throughout His life, He was rejected over and over again. The religious leaders of His day hated Him. His family didn't believe in Him. His closest friends turned their backs on Him in His greatest time of need, and one of them even betrayed Him! At the end of His earthly ministry, the crowds turned against Him and called for His execution. As He hung on the cross between two criminals, Jesus cried out, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

When the hurts in life go beyond what we think we can bear, how do we survive the pain? How do we forgive? How do we begin to heal when it hurts so bad? We can follow the example of Jesus and PRAY!

Here are three things we can pray for the people who have hurt us:

- Pray for God to heal their pain. If they have hurt other people, more than likely, they are hurting inside. Ask God to bring healing into their life.
- Pray for God to forgive them. Pray they will turn from their sin, repent, and find forgiveness in Jesus Christ.
- Pray for God to bless them. Pray for them to experience the goodness of God to lead them to repentance.

As you pray for others, God will begin to do a work of healing and forgiveness in your own heart.

What is God saying to you?

What does it mean to you?

What action steps do you need to take?

Bring it to God in prayer.

Day 2

Scripture

“But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Matthew 6:15

Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

Matthew 18:21–22

Reflect

On the surface, Matthew 6:15 can be a challenging scripture to understand. The thought that God might not forgive some of our sins is quite unnerving.

Thankfully the Apostle Peter's interaction with Jesus in Matthew 6 helps us understand the heart of forgiveness. In his humanity, Peter posed the question to Jesus most of us would probably be too afraid to ask. “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?” Peter wondered the same thing we all do from time to time: *Lord, how long do I have to keep putting up with this person?*

Peter thought for sure Jesus would let him off the hook because, surely, there must be a limit to how many times someone should forgive another. To Peter's surprise, Jesus answered the question with a big number: “seventy times seven.” In the Hebrew language, the number 490 represents something complete or perfect. It also gives us a picture of something being infinite. In other words, Jesus said Peter's forgiveness should be infinite in nature. Unlimited! Just as God's forgiveness toward us is unlimited, Peter was admonished to do the same.

God is serious about forgiveness. Refusing to forgive someone who has hurt us negatively impacts our relationship with them and, more importantly, obstructs our relationship with God. Let's choose to forgive others quickly and completely and remove the things that hinder our connection to others and to God.

What is God saying to you?

What does it mean to you?

What action steps do you need to take?

Bring it to God in prayer.

Day 3

Scripture

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame...

Hebrews 12:2

Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

Colossians 3:13

Reflect

Surprisingly, those we love the most often hurt us the most. In Scripture, we read how just five days before his crucifixion Jesus gloriously entered the city of Jerusalem riding a donkey and the crowd worshiping Him. The streets were lined with people laying down palm branches heralding the King of the Jews. Even the disciples vowed to follow Him regardless of the cost. However, in Jesus' most painful moment, those closest to Him turned away as the Romans brutally beat and crucified Him.

How did Jesus find it in His heart to forgive? He did it by looking at His pain from a different perspective. Hebrews 12:2 tells us Jesus endured the cross because of what He knew was waiting on the other side. Instead of the hurt and betrayal He experienced, Jesus focused on the redemption He knew His death would purchase for us.

Colossians 3:13 tells us we must forgive, "as Christ forgave us." We will all experience hurt and disappointment in life. Offense may come at the hands of an enemy or a friend—but it is going to come. If we think back on the times God forgave us when we hurt and sinned against someone, it is much easier for us to forgive those who sinned against us.

Instead of holding onto offense, focus on how Christ has forgiven you. Choose to forgive the way Christ has forgiven you. Instead of becoming bitter, look at what is on the other side: good news! God is going to bring healing and draw you closer to Him on the other side of your hurt.

What is God saying to you?

What does it mean to you?

What action steps do you need to take?

Bring it to God in prayer.

Day 4

Scripture

And he [David] said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again?"

2 Samuel 12:22-23

Reflect

Many of us carry pain from the sins and failures of our past. Maybe our failings happened a week ago, a month ago, or decades ago, but we still carry regret around as if it happened yesterday. It's often harder for us to forgive ourselves than forgive someone else.

David, the King of Israel, initiated an adulterous affair with a woman named Bathsheba. She became pregnant, while her husband, Uriah, was away from home serving in the army. After a failed attempt at bringing Uriah home to cover David's sin, David put Uriah out on the front line where he was killed.

In the course of time, Bathsheba delivered David's baby, but the child was very sick. David repented, fasted, and prayed day and night for God to spare his son's life, but on the seventh day, David received the tragic news that his child died.

Upon receiving the news of his son's death, David did something seemingly odd. He immediately got up, washed himself, changed his clothes, then went to the Tabernacle and worshipped the Lord. Why did he do that? David understood nothing can change the past. We can mourn for a season, which is right, appropriate, and necessary. But once we repent of our sins and ask God for forgiveness, we must learn to accept what cannot be changed and move on in life. God isn't finished with us yet!

What is God saying to you?

What does it mean to you?

What action steps do you need to take?

Bring it to God in prayer.

Day 5

Scripture

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

2 Corinthians 7:10

Reflect

In this verse we read about two kinds of sorrow. The first is godly sorrow, which expresses itself in statements like, “God, I’m sorry I’ve hurt you and other people.” This kind of sorrow leads to repentance and salvation and leaves us without regret. The other kind of sorrow—worldly sorrow—is the kind most people carry with them. Worldly sorrow selfishly says, “I’m sorry I did this and for how it is affecting me.” This type of sorrow leads to death in our spiritual lives and in our relationships.

Whether it is our own wrongdoing or someone else’s, it is important we learn how to turn worldly sorrow into forgiveness and repentance. When we do this, we free ourselves from the pain of the past.

There are three places we can turn our pain and sorrow:

- We can turn it INWARD. When we turn inward, we blame ourselves for our pain and remain trapped in self-pity.
- We can turn it OUTWARD. When we turn outward, we look for others to “heal” us from our pain, but this leaves us always needing more.
- We can turn it UPWARD. God alone is the source of strength and peace during times of sorrow. In His presence, we can find the help, comfort, and forgiveness we need to finally let go of the past.

Who do you need to forgive? Is it a friend, a parent, a spouse, or a co-worker? Or is today the day you are finally ready to forgive yourself?

What is God saying to you?

What does it mean to you?

What action steps do you need to take?

Bring it to God in prayer.

Day 6

Scripture

“Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

Isaiah 43:18–19

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:13–14

Reflect

Our spiritual enemy, the devil, nudges us to peer into the rearview mirror of our lives. He wants us to reflect on the pain and offense in our past. He is out to keep us jaded and embittered. Though we've been hurt by others, God's plan and a purpose for us is yet to be fulfilled. We cannot stop pursuing God and His plan because of something someone did to us.

The key to experiencing the new life God has for us is to *focus on what He has given us, not the losses we have experienced.*

The problem is we tend to remember the things we should forget and forget the things we should remember. We often focus on things in our past God would look at and say, “I forgave that years ago, please forgive yourself and move forward.”

We all fail at some point in our lives. Maybe the pain and loss you experienced will never go away completely. While we cannot change the past, we can be certain God has something new for us in our future.

Let go of your past and focus on the great future God has for you. Pray and ask God what He wants to do through you from this day forward. If you allow Him to redeem and restore you, God can bring redemption and a fresh start into your life today.

What is God saying to you?

What does it mean to you?

What action steps do you need to take?

Bring it to God in prayer.
