



UNFILTERED

REAL FAITH IN A FAKE WORLD

Forgiveness and Restoration

A man once joined a monastery where the monks were allowed to speak only two words every ten years. After the first decade, the abbot asked him for his two words. "Bed hard," he said. Ten years later: "Food bad." After thirty years, he stood up and declared, "I quit." The abbot sighed and replied, "I'm not surprised. All you've done since you got here is complain."

Some of us treat church conflict the same way. We hold onto a grievance (something that made us upset) for years, replay it in our minds, talk about it whenever we get the chance, and eventually announce that we're done, without ever realizing that we've been part of the problem all along.

Paul refused to let the church in Corinth become that kind of place. A man had sinned publicly, the church addressed it with discipline, and now the man had repented. At that point, the real danger was no longer the original sin but the refusal to forgive.

Forgiveness is the mark of a healthy church and a healthy student ministry.

Icebreaker

On a scale of 1-10, how good are you at forgiving people?

Daily Devotions

Day 1 : Read It

Read 2 Corinthians 2:5–11.

Explore It

1. According to verses 5–6, who was grieved by this person's sin?

2. What two things does Paul command the church to do instead of merely punish?

3. What reasons does Paul give for urging forgiveness and comfort?

4. According to verse 8, what are they to “reaffirm”?

5. What reason did Paul give for writing this letter?

6. Who uses unforgiveness in his schemes?

Day 2 — Today's Theme: Church Discipline

Read 2 Corinthians 2:5–6.

When I was in 2nd grade, I was in Cub Scouts. My dad bought me my first jackknife, and I decided to take it to school. At lunchtime, one student started to bully me, so I whipped out my jackknife and chased him around the lunch room. Needless to say I ended up in big trouble and that rewarded me with a trip to the principal's office and a meeting with my parents. Of course, I received corrective discipline, and I never brought a knife to school ever again.

As believers in Jesus, God calls us to continually help one another walk with Jesus and stay away from sin. That means lovingly calling each other out to repentance and restoration in our relationship with Jesus and others when we see another Christian committing a sin. Sometimes someone is caught in continual sin or finds themselves committing a big sin (like I did by bringing a jackknife to school) and corrective action has to take place from the church.

A person in the church at Corinth caused a lot of trouble and hurt people. The church decided it was necessary to “discipline” him for it. This discipline caused him to endure some kind of “punishment by the majority” (2:5–6).

While we don't know his name or exactly what he did, he also seems to have sinned specifically against Paul during his painful visit after 1 Corinthians was written. The church had taken action against the man, most likely excommunicating him (telling him that he is not welcome back at church unless he repents of his sin).

7. Read Galatians 6:1. When is it necessary (what sins) to confront a Christian caught in a sin? What does that look like for our small group?

8. Ephesians 4:15 says that we are to “speak the truth in love.” What does that mean? What if we speak with truth and no love? What if we speak in love and no truth?

9. Without saying names unless you want to share about yourself, have you ever had a situation where you confronted your friend or your friend(s) confronted you because of a sin? What happened?

Day 3 — Today's Theme: Forgiveness is not Optional

Read 2 Corinthians 2:7–10.

God commands us to replace destructive words and attitudes with kindness and compassion toward others. And if you have been hurt by someone, you are to forgive them! Our motivation for forgiveness is to look to the cross of Christ. Imagine going back in time and standing at the foot of the cross and looking up and thanking Jesus for forgiving you for all of the countless sins that you have committed against him. Then imagine someone who has hurt you deeply and that you struggle to forgive is standing in front of you at the foot of the cross too. How can you say thank you Jesus for forgiving you of all your sins and not forgive that person who hurt you? Forgiveness doesn't mean that you will necessarily forget what the person did to you because we don't have the ability to forget. However, forgiveness means that you won't count that sin against that person anymore. Forgiveness involves three things. It's a commitment not to bring it up again in a conversation with that person. It's a commitment not to talk about it with anyone else. And it's a commitment not to dwell on what that person did to hurt you, and when it does come to your mind to take that thought and make it captive to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

10. What makes it hard to forgive?

11. Is there someone in your life that you need to forgive? Ask the Lord to help you forgive that person and then make the choice to forgive them!

Day 4 — Today's Theme: Restoration

Read 2 Corinthians 2:8.

A number of years ago, I injured my knee. I had torn a ligament that wouldn't heal without surgery. The doctor surgically repaired my knee, but it took time to heal and physical therapy before my knee was fully restored and functioning again. In the same way, church discipline is like surgery where it is necessary to correct the sinning believer.

When a believer sins, he hurts his relationship with God, others, and the church. The goal of church discipline is to restore the wayward sinner to God, others, and the church.

The individual in Corinth who was disciplined for his sin had come to a place of repentance in his life. The problem, however, was that the church had gone too far and was not forgiving and restoring the man to the Corinthian church upon his repentance. They had missed the purpose of church discipline, which is to bring about restoration to Christian fellowship, not revenge (see Matt. 18:15–20). So, Paul called the church to forgive and reaffirm their love for the sinner by restoring him to fellowship.

12. Share a time when you, a family member, or a friend had an injury or medical condition that required medical intervention. What did it take to bring about restoration?

13. Explain the difference between forgiveness and restoration.

14. Can you share an example in your life when not only was forgiveness granted but that restoration took place? What did it take to bring about restoration and how does it feel to experience restoration?

15. God not only forgives us when we confess our sin, but He restores our relationship with Himself. How should that be a motive for us to forgive and restore our relationships with others?

Day 5 — Today's Theme: Satan's Schemes

Read 2 Corinthians 2:11.

One evening I received a tip that a bunch of students were planning to TP (toilet paper) my house. So I prepared for them. I hid in my side yard with my garden hose turned on next to me ready to spray them with water when they came. Sure enough, they showed up and I sprayed them with water and chased them back toward their cars. We have an enemy in Satan who is looking to trip us up. We need to be wise to his schemes. One of Satan's schemes was for the Corinthian church not to forgive the repentant brother and not restore him back into the church. This unforgiving spirit does not demonstrate the heart of God and created division within the Corinthian church. We are to forgive others just as God has forgiven us (Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:32). First Peter 5:8 says, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." Watch out for Satan and his schemes!

- 16. The two ways Satan was scheming against the Corinthian church were not only to have them hold on to an unforgiving spirit but also to create division. What are ways that Satan tries to create division within our student ministry? What is your responsibility to make sure division doesn't take place?**

- 17. In what other ways does Satan attack us and try to trip us up?**

- 18. How do we counter Satan's schemes? What's one way we can pay better attention to his schemes?**