

WEEK OF: 5/15/16

MEMORY VERSE: "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:14-15 (NLT)

******Remember to listen to this week's sermon, review the Sermon Notes Sheet and complete the discussion questions before attending your Connection Group.***

INTRODUCTION:

When we pray for God's forgiveness, we are asking God to let us off the hook. Our request is that the burden of guilt resting on our shoulders would be lifted up and carried away. We want our relationship with the Father restored.

Receiving forgiveness is wonderful! Extending forgiveness is another matter. When we have been hurt, we want the one who hurt us to pay.

In this week's sermon and Connexion Group lesson you will learn why we should forgive those who have hurt us.

OPENING DISCUSSION QUESTION

What was most helpful, encouraging, or challenging from this week's sermon?

GROUP LESSON DISCUSSION

1. A young Korean graduate student was mailing a letter home when a gang of homeless teenagers attacked and beat him to death. The student's parents sat silently through the entire trial in Philadelphia. All they wanted was a chance to speak at the end.

After the guilty verdict was read, the parents knelt in a stunned courtroom and begged the judge to release their son's killers to them. They wanted to provide the boys with the love and care they had never experienced. The Korean couple told the judge that they were Christians. and they wanted to demonstrate the grace they had received from God to these boys who had wounded them so deeply.

The judge responded tearfully, "That is not the way our system of justice works."

Did the Korean couple respond as Jesus would have, or were they misguided in their approach to the situation? Explain your position.

Should forgiveness excuse the other person from the consequences of their actions? Explain your answer.

2. What sin would you find it most difficult to forgive in your best friend? In your spouse? In your pastor? In your parents or child?
3. Read Matthew 6:5-15. Some readers of the prayer have concluded that God's forgiveness is *earned* by our own forgiveness of others. Other readers believe that our forgiveness of other people is the *evidence* that God has forgiven us. Explain why you agree or disagree with each view.

Why does Jesus make forgiveness such a crucial issue for followers?

4. If we refuse to forgive another person, what do Jesus' words force us to conclude about ourselves (vv. 14-15)?

How would you counsel another Christians who came to you justifying why they are not forgiving someone?

5. The final requests in the Lord's Prayer are "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (v. 13). What temptation from the evil one might we experience right after we pray for the courage to forgive someone?

What specific things can we as Christians do to demonstrate to our society that we are a forgiving community?

next steps

As you take steps towards being more forgiven, take time to read the following Bible passages this week.

Day 1: Matthew 6:5-8

Day 2: Matthew 6:9-13

Day 3: Matthew 6:14-15

Day 4: Philemon 4-21

Day 5: Matthew 18:21-27

Day 6: Matthew 18:28-30

Day 7: Matthew 18:31-35