

Lesson Guide

National Women's Auxiliary Department

(Target Group – All Ages)

Topic: "The Danger of Unforgiveness"

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times:

but, until seventy times seven.

(Matthew 18:21-22)

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

(Mark 11:25-26)

I. Introduction

Unforgiveness is the single most poison that the enemy uses against God's people, and it is one of the deadliest poisons a person can take spiritually.

There are four aspects of forgiveness:

1. Unforgiveness is a kind of soul sickness that is unhealthy;
2. It masks our own sinfulness, which separates us from the grace of God;
3. Cuts us off from the fullness of all other relationships – **resentment**;
4. It is not what Jesus would do.

Forgiveness is the refusal to forgive is probably one of the most exhausting struggles we face, because much of the battle takes place in our minds and emotions. We may mentally replay an event that has happened to us and our reactions to it for days or months, and in some cases, years or a lifetime. Some people cannot or choose not to work past the hurts they have suffered. They are stuck in a cul-de-sac of emotion and never take advantage of the opportunity God has given them to avoid things such as anger, resentment, bitterness and fear.

Our unforgiveness becomes the act of becoming judge, jury, and executioner, over and over again in our thought life. One of the things it does is masks our own sinfulness and results in our need to look at our own life before God's eyes.

Have you ever seen someone that is tied to a chain? It is always painful anytime anyone is tied like an animal with a **visible** chain or tied like some of us – to an **invisible** chain. Some of us are still tied to some unresolved issue that pulls us back with a painful snap like a chain wrapped around the neck of a zealous dog.

One of the strongest bondage that is chaining the people of God is – **an unforgiving heart**. It is almost an epidemic. It hides in the hearts of saved women. An unforgiving heart attacks preachers, wives, husbands, and children. It is an equal opportunity problem. It exists in the ghetto and in the white house. It touches the beautiful, the rich, the poor, blacks, and whites.

The stronghold of an unforgiving heart is a **strong chain** and not easily broken. It is wrapped around the neck of our potentials and chokes the wind out of our **peace, prosperity, purpose, and destiny**.

Unforgiveness is as lethal as poison and as contagious as **AIDS**. It will grow undetected inside like a cancer eating away at the guts of its victims.

II. Breaking the Stronghold of Forgiveness

We are called to be free, but we must get rid of the chain that the enemy uses to ensnare us.

Like an animal that is chained, unforgiveness doesn't attach itself to all of you, just a part of you. It attaches itself to an area where you feel you have been violated. Once it has a grip on you, it will restrict other areas. It works like a chain.

Unforgiveness can really restrict and ultimately will affect other areas in our lives. When we can't bring ourselves to release old issues our destiny is strangled.

One of the most famous excuses is to say that I will not forgive until the perpetrator asks for forgiveness. It is the "She must apologize or I won't forgive her syndrome." Why would you allow your deliverance to be dependent upon someone else's ability to do the right thing? That is too much power to give anyone!

Have you had an area where you have been mistreated and you want the other party to come to you? Well, suppose they do not. Will you hold that grudge against them for a lifetime? How long are you willing to feel the blood rushing through your veins when you see them approach? How long will you let defiance and indignation consume you when you hear their name? You will become a prisoner of this situation if you don't let it go.

III. A Trick of the Enemy

Whenever a thief gets ready to steal from you, he needs a legal way of entry. He needs some foothold that he can use to access your goods. He needs some way he can take control of your valuables.

The Bible says that "the thief cometh!" There is nothing that you or I can do to stop him from coming. It is a fact that "the thief cometh." Since we can't stop him from coming we can at least stop him from being successful. He has a purpose in coming. "He cometh not but to kill, steal and destroy."

The devil needs access. You must be prepared since you are forewarned that He will come. At least you can be prepared.

One of the ways that the enemy steals from us is through **unforgiveness**. It is sometimes the most unchecked, unresolved issues in the kingdom. Why? Because it *hides* in **reasons** and *dresses up* in **excuses**. But, when it is over, it has robbed not the perpetrator, but **the victim**.

If you ever wake up and realize how much the enemy has embezzled you through unforgiveness, you will be so upset with yourself because your future is oozing out through the bitter wounds of the past. No matter what has been done to you, no matter who did it, forgiveness is still worth it!

Jesus, when He was on the cross, defeated the enemy because He refused to hold a grudge against those who had crucified Him.

Now, if anyone had a right to have a spirit of unforgiveness, it was Jesus. He had done nothing at all but good. He healed, helped, and blessed people everywhere. Yet in His time of need the crowds were quiet.

Whatever you have in your heart that is not pleasing to God get rid of it right now. It is not worth it! No one is worth losing your joy and peace over. Let it go! That is what forgiveness mean; **it means letting it go!** When you forgive, you dismiss it out of you so there is nothing in you.

Can you say that there is nothing in you? No animosity or anger, resentment or frustration? How can you expect to be mightily used of God if Satan has something in you?

You must get unforgiveness out of you. It will control your moods and your attitudes. Unforgiveness has ruined marriages and relationships, ministries, and homes. **IT IS THE MECHANISM OF HELL – IT IS UNFORGIVENESS!**

Our unforgiveness not only cuts us off from God's grace, but it also cuts us off from others, even the ones we love. With the bitterness of unforgiveness comes the emotional illness of resentment. To resent is to "hurt again." When we hurt we begin to close our emotional doors to protect ourselves until the hurt is over. That means that no one else can come in emotionally. The problem with unforgiveness and resentment is that every time we hurt again, every time we become the judge, jury, and executioner in our mind's courtroom we experience hurt again and our emotional walls go up again. This is a bondage that we must free ourselves from.

IV. Handling the Hurts We Feel

Before you can really begin the healing process of forgiveness, you must come to a point where you acknowledge that God is aware of every struggle you encounter. He knows that some

of the hurts you have suffered are intensely painful. He understands that you need to *grieve, heal, and be restored*. However, He is also aware that if you drop your guard and allow bitterness, anger, and resentment to set up shop in your life, you will suffer an even greater emotional pain.

There are three parts to uncovering the danger of unforgiveness:

A. Choose to Let Go of Every Feeling of Resentment

No matter what others have done, forgiveness means not harboring angry feelings against those who have harmed us.

B. Lay Down the Right to Get Even

We must never forget that we do not have rights when it comes to forgiveness and obedience to God. We forgive because He commands us to do so. You forgive because that is what He desires for you to do.

An unforgiving spirit binds us to the abuser. We may think that in order for the person to be punished, we need to remain angry, but all we are doing is hurting ourselves even more. You extend forgiveness to another person even though he or she may not deserve or ask for it. You are responding like God – like Christ and like the person you were created to be.

C. Allow God to Deal With the Person Who Has Hurt or Abused You

Forgive because this is God's will for your life. Then turn the person over to Him. Unforgiveness is a ticking time bomb just waiting for the right moment to go off.

When the brokenness of the past continues to take center stage in your life, you miss God's blessings – one after another. The focus of your life does not need to be on previous hurts. You cannot go forward if you are only looking behind.

Forgive and then set up healthy boundaries. You may never see the person who has hurt you again. You must take the important step of releasing your anger, fear, and resentment toward that individual. You can do this in prayer with God.

V. Forgiveness Brings Joy and Peace

God uses broken people – those who have experienced unspeakable hurts. It is difficult for God to use angry, bitter people.

So many people harbor feelings of guilt for thoughts and actions that happened in the past. But, if you want to live free, live for Christ and not for any of the world's demands, especially the demand to hold captive past thoughts or hurts.

When dealing with forgiveness or the lack of it, a single truth remains consistent: the person who has an unforgiving spirit hurts far more than someone who has grasped the principle of forgiveness and applied it to his or her life.

We cannot harbor dark feelings and live a godly, healthy life. We can try to do it, but we are the ones who suffer, and usually the suffering spreads to other areas and other people we love.

You can deny there is a problem and tell yourself that you are fine, but if you have a spirit of unforgiveness residing within your life, then at some point there will be evidence of the internal destruction taking place in your life. We need to take forgiveness seriously because it is a major issue for every believer.

VI. Conclusion

Even when we face horrendous trials, we can trust Him to bring good out of the very circumstances that appear dark and foreboding. There is no need to struggle with unforgiveness another day.

When unforgiveness leads you to animosity, bitterness, resentment and hostility, you waste your life, and you miss the best that God has for you. You also end up suffering the consequences of your sin. Therefore, don't allow unforgiveness to remain in your life any longer. Make a firm decision to forgive today. Forgiveness always starts with an act of **your WILL**, it never just happens.