

Social Unit: Session 3

Forgiveness

Review: Last two weeks we looked at Rejection and Judging Others.

- How are we to respond to rejection or judgment?

Today we are going to talk about forgiveness; and in particular, how we can be set free from the “prison of unforgiveness.”

Summary: When you are sinned against, you need to forgive. Forgiveness means believe that Christ's sacrifice was the full payment needed for that person's offense. If you don't forgive someone who has hurt you, you end up in a Prison of Unforgiveness. You are set free from this prison by using the keys God has provided. The keys to freedom are to forgive the offense, the hurt, and the ramifications and repent of your sinful reactions.

Key Verse: “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).

Do you have feelings of anger, resentment, or hatred toward someone who has hurt you? Do those feelings torment you? Learning how to truly forgive will set you free.

What is forgiveness?

Regardless of how the offense happened or who did it, if you don't forgive, you will never be truly free. Your offender was in the wrong but you are the one who ends up in bondage.

Keith Drury, in his book, *Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People* puts it like this:

Inner resentment is a spreading cancer of the soul. It multiplies its malignant tentacles, spreading to the deepest parts of our heart. A grudge pours its corrosive bitterness into our entire mindset. Soon we open the door for envy, malice, jealousy, bitterness, gossip, and slander -- we will stop at nothing to even the score. Holding a grudge will eat your insides. Eventually you will become a bitter person. All this happens because you refuse to forgive the one who hurt you. The price is too high. It's not worth it.

The prison of unforgiveness has four bars.

- The first bar of the prison is **the offense**. This is the wrong that the person did to you.
- The second bar of the prison is **the hurt**. This is how you felt *emotionally* as a result of the offense.
- The third bar is **the ramifications** of the offense. This is how the offense affected your life.
- The fourth bar is your **sinful reactions**. These are the wrong choices you made as a result of the offense.

Can you relate to these four bars? Is there a time when you were held in this prison?

What makes it hard to forgive?

What does Jesus say about forgiveness in Matthew 6:12-15?

Choosing to forgive is an act of your will. Forgiveness is not based on your *feelings*.

According to Ephesians 4:32, what is the motivation or example for forgiveness?

Notice that the keys to unlock the Prison of Unforgiveness are in your hand.

- Key 1: Forgive the offense.
- Key 2: Forgive the hurt.
- Key 3: Forgive the ramifications.
- Key 4: Repent of sinful reactions.

You may need to go through this process many times if you are in a relationship where there is regular hurt or offenses.

- What did Peter ask Jesus in Matthew 18:21-22 and what was Jesus' response?

According to Matthew 5:23-24, does it matter whose "fault" the offense is?

Part of being reconciled to others is seeking forgiveness when you have wronged them. Even if their wrong seems bigger, you need to take responsibility for your unkind words and actions.

Seeking forgiveness is:

- Seeing how you hurt another person by your words or actions.
- Going to or calling that person. be sure you have completed the process of forgiving that person before you go.
- Saying "I was wrong for what I did (state your offense). Would you please forgive me?"
- Not making any excuse for the wrong you have committed.
- Doing everything that you can to make restitution.
- Responding quickly.

Going back to Keith Drury; he concluded his chapter on Grudges with this challenge:

Have you been hurt? Has someone been unjust to you? A parent? Brother or sister? Child? Neighbor? Teacher? Former spouse? Perhaps a group or institution hurt you: a school, church, committee, board, youth group. Have you fully forgiven these people? Do you harbor a bit of a grudge for anyone anywhere in your past?... Perhaps your injury was especially deep. Could you at least begin to forgive? Are you telling yourself "I can't forgive" when you really mean "I won't forgive?" Are you truly unable to forgive? Are you willing to be made willing? Is the Lord gently urging you to begin? To start? If so, why not turn the corner today? Why not tell Him right now, "Lord, I'm going to begin my road to recovery...and I shall not turn back until I have fully forgiven that person." The Great Forgiver will help you.

How can we pray for one another?

Next Week: Loving Others

