

10 STEPS TO FREEDOM
Week 5: The Unforgiveness Trap
SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS



RECAP

In this fifth sermon walking the path to freedom, Josh walked through Matthew 6:9-15 and the vital part that forgiveness plays in our freedom. Until we can release our hurts through forgiveness, we'll never truly be free.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (*know that these discussion questions will be sensitive to some in your group, so use discretion and discernment as you walk through them together*).

1. The driving question for this week is: *how do I get past my past?* Take some time and as a group share as much of your past with your group as you feel comfortable. What are some of the greatest memories? What are some of the hurts? What from your past still tends to linger today?
2. "Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies." Have you ever experienced the bitterness that comes from unforgiveness? Did it begin to spill over into the other relationships in your life? How did you eventually put the poison of bitterness down?
3. Josh shared three reasons why it's difficult for us to forgive others. Which one do you identify with the most? Why has it been so difficult for you to forgive in the past?
 - We have the wrong idea of forgiveness.
 - We don't think it's fair.
 - We don't think we can do it.
4. Read Matthew 6:14-15. If you're a parent (or if you remember your parents doing this), have you ever had to give your child "extra motivation" to do something they didn't want to do? Did you do it out of spite or out of love? When God commands us to forgive even when we don't want to, is He commanding us out of love as well?
5. Look at the four steps to truly forgive someone (on the message notes). Which one is the easiest? Which one is the hardest? Which one will you focus on this week?

NEXT STEP

- As a group, talk about some specific situations where you need to release your hurt through forgiveness. Encourage each other and pray with each other as you begin to truly forgive.

For more information (training and support) on how to start a small group, contact steve.lizzio@cbcva.org



CENTREVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2018
WEEK 5: THE UNFORGIVENESS TRAP
MATTHEW 6:9-15, ROMANS 12:19-21

Step FIVE to Freedom: **Release your hurt through** _____.

4 STEPS TO TRULY FORGIVE SOMEONE

1. Meditate on how much God has _____.
2. Try and see them from a _____.
3. Decide that their _____ is not worth your _____.
4. Trust that God will _____ you.

Bonus Content

Sunday (This Handout) - 7 Questions Worksheet on Matthew 6:14-15 and Small Group Questions for this week
Monday (Blog) - 3 Hurdles That Keep us From Forgiving
Wednesday (Facebook Live) - 3 Steps to Forgiving Yourself
Thursday (Blog) - 4 Steps to Truly Forgiving Someone
Monday - Friday (Blog) - Devotionals from 10 Steps to Freedom book

For bonus content and much more, visit: ioshdaffern.com

MATTHEW 6:14-15

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14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. *Matthew 6:14-15*

1. WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THE ORIGINAL READERS?

If you start with today you're twenty centuries too late.

In Matthew 6:14-15 Jesus adds a postscript to the famous Lord's Prayer and further explains the importance of forgiveness in a believer's life. When read at first glance it might seem like salvation itself is contingent upon our forgiveness of others, because if we're not forgiven by God can we be saved? In these verses Jesus is not referring to our eternal justification before God, which happens through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and cannot be undone.

In these verses Jesus is describing how our daily, personal, interactive relationship with God will suffer when we don't forgive. Think of it this way: if you have multiple children, perhaps the greatest joy you have is when you see your children love each other. If there is friction, dysfunctional or broken relationships between your children, your relationship with them won't be completely right until their relationships with each other are right. In the same way, every human walking on this planet has a Heavenly Father that desperately loves them, and when we harbor unforgiveness in our hearts, we are consciously holding onto an offense and breaking relationships between people all created in God's image. With our Heavenly Father, our relationship with Him will be broken if our relationships with others remain broken through unforgiveness. Jesus intentionally used strong and provocative language to underscore the importance of forgiveness in our lives. Forgiveness is not optional or something we do for extra credit. It is essential to our own relationship with God.

GREEK WORD OF THE WEEK

ἀφίημι (*aphiēmi*) is the Greek word for "forgive" and it is used in both verse 14 and 15. The Greek word means to "stop blaming or taking an offense into account, to send away or to dismiss." Because forgiveness is so hard for Christians today, it's important to go back to the original text. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting or validating the offense against you. It is sending the offense away, dismissing it, not because it is unimportant or un hurtful, but because you are releasing it to God, who will avenge on your behalf.

2. WHAT'S THE CONTEXT? *Scripture without context makes no sense.*

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) is famous throughout history as the one time Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. In the Lord's Prayer there are six petitions, but only one of the petitions, the petition for God's forgiveness as we forgive others, gets a specific follow up. It's as if Jesus knew that of all the petitions in the Lord's Prayer, this would be the most difficult to put into practice. As always, Jesus has a deeper insight into human nature than anyone else and knows where we will struggle, so verses 14-15 are his follow up to help clarify and give additional motivation to forgive others.

3. WHAT TIMELESS TRUTHS ARE THERE?

Since the Word doesn't change it still matters today.

- People will sin against us. There is no avoiding it. Our sinful nature drives us to live for ourselves at the expense of others.
- Our personal relationship and intimacy with our Heavenly Father is directly tied to how we interact (i.e. forgiveness or unforgiveness) with other people.
- Every person against whom you are harboring unforgiveness has a Heavenly Father that loves them and is protective over them.
- You cannot harbor unforgiveness towards other people and remain close to God.

5. HOW DOES IT APPLY TODAY? *Information without application becomes stagnation.*

- Forgiveness is not a feeling. It is a choice.
- Forgiveness means saying, "You don't owe me anything anymore."
- Forgiveness is an essential step towards our freedom.
- Unforgiveness doesn't hurt the other person so much as it hurts and entraps us.
- When you forgive someone, you're not condoning what they did to you, you're deciding that their offense is not worth your continued pain and bitterness.
- When we forgive, we allow room for God to avenge us (Romans 12:19).

4. WHERE ELSE IN SCRIPTURE DOES IT SAY THIS? *The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture.*

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"
22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. *Matthew 18:21-22*

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. *Ephesians 4:32*

6. HOW SHOULD THIS CHANGE THE WAY I LIVE IN COMMUNITY? *The Bible comes alive in me when I live it in community.*

- Spend time reflecting on how much God has forgiven you. Dwell on it. Tease it out and let the reality sink deep into your pores. Acknowledging how much God has forgiven you, what justification do you really have to withhold forgiveness from others?
- What are the things that keep you from forgiving others? What are motivations you can use to release your hurt through forgiveness? Who do you need to forgive today?

7. HOW CAN MY LIFE GET BETTER BECAUSE OF THESE VERSES? *If I trust God and step in faith, what kind of life will God create?*

Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies. It never harms the other person so much as it harms you. Unforgiveness turns into bitterness, and once bitterness takes root in your life, it will begin to corrode and destroy everything good in your life. Jesus doesn't take such a harsh stance on forgiveness as a burden to you, but as a way to free you. Like a parent doing everything within their means to help a child take medicine that will heal them, Jesus does everything he can to motivate us to do the one thing that has the power to set us free from the pain of our past more than anything else: forgiveness. When we forgive others, we will begin to live in true freedom.