

What are some of the reasons given for not forgiving others?

Two things to note in these verses- 1) the king expected the servant to show mercy just as the king had extended mercy, and 2) forgiveness comes from the heart. Ultimately God is interested in changing our hearts more than our actions, because good things flow from hearts changed by God.

Luke 6:45 NLT - 45 A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.

Pray that God would change your heart to be a reflection of Him and that because of the mercy He has shown to you, mercy would flow naturally from you to others, even if they don't deserve it.

WRAP-UP

As you seek to forgive this week, let this prayer be your guide: "Lord, thank you for your gift of forgiveness. Your only Son loved me enough to come to earth and experience the worst pain imaginable so I could be forgiven. Your mercy flows to me in spite of my faults and failures. Help me demonstrate unconditional love today, even to those who hurt me. Amen"

Memory Verse

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.
Colossians 3:12-14 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

Challenge- If God has brought to mind someone you need to forgive, start by identifying what they have done to harm you, then determine to forgive that debt and never hold it against them again.

"Forgive, Forgive, Forgive"

Million Little Things - Week #3

INTRODUCTION

If you've ever been offended, wronged or hurt by others (and who hasn't) you might think they need your forgiveness. You might even feel you exert some power over them when you withhold forgiveness. But because harboring unforgiveness is actually self-destructive, it is you who benefits most when you choose to forgive. So, in this study we will consider the nature of forgiveness and the damage we do to ourselves when we refuse to forgive.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

When was the last time you said, "Please forgive me."?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. God's Forgiveness and Our Forgiveness

At the heart of unforgiveness is the belief that someone owes you a debt and you have a right to demand repayment. But our forgiveness of others is linked to God's forgiveness of us. In fact, the link between God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others is part of the Lord's Prayer.

12 and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
Mat 6:12 NLT

If you learned this passage in another translation you might say "forgive us our trespasses" or "forgive us our debts". The word in this prayer is *opheilēma* and it refers to what is legally or justly owed.

In the Lord's prayer, what do you think Jesus is referring to that we justly owe God? What are the kinds of debts others might owe to us? If you asked God for mercy, do you believe He forgives you? If you dared to ask Him for justice, what would happen?

When we choose to forgive, we extend mercy (not getting the punishment deserved) rather than seeking justice (payment of what is rightly owed). The word for “forgive” is *aphiēmi* and it means to set free or let go. In this case it means letting go of the debt owed us, choosing to set someone free of that obligation.

2. What We Can and Can't do about Forgiveness

If you've ever tried to “forgive and forget” you've probably found it virtually impossible. We really don't have control over our memory. Because the memory of our hurts remains, we only have control over how we respond to those memories.

Colossians 3:12-14 NLT - 12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must *clothe yourselves* with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, *clothe yourselves* with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

In his letter to the Colossians Paul was not making suggestions. He told the Colossians how to respond to those who offend them and why.

How does this passage indicate that our actions (e.g. being forgiving, or loving) are choices we make rather than feelings we can't control?

Why would holding on to unforgiveness make verse 12 impossible?

So, if we choose not to forgive, we are undermining everything that God intends His people to reflect. It is easy to agree that we should forgive but it's difficult to do.

Can you identify practices that will either fuel your unforgiveness, or foster forgiveness?

3. Not A One-Time Thing

Matthew 18:21-22 NLT - 21 Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" 22 "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"

Based on the question posed by Peter in Matthew 18:21, and the answer given by Jesus, we see forgiveness is not “once and done.” We will have many opportunities to choose forgiveness, sometimes for the same offence.

What are the consequences of the choices we make to forgive or not (Mat 6:15)?

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

God treats unforgiveness very seriously because He knows that it is like hitting the self-destruction button in your life. Unforgiveness might even be an indication that we aren't giving God control, because if God is in control, we know He is merciful and forgiving.

To illustrate the importance of forgiveness, Jesus told Peter a parable. In that parable, after being forgiven a great debt, the ungrateful servant chose not to forgive the small debt of a fellow servant.

Matthew 18:32 NLT - 32 Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' 34 Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. 35 "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."

When we choose not to forgive, we will suffer consequences, because unforgiveness chains us to the past, poisons our present, and keeps us from God's future in our lives.