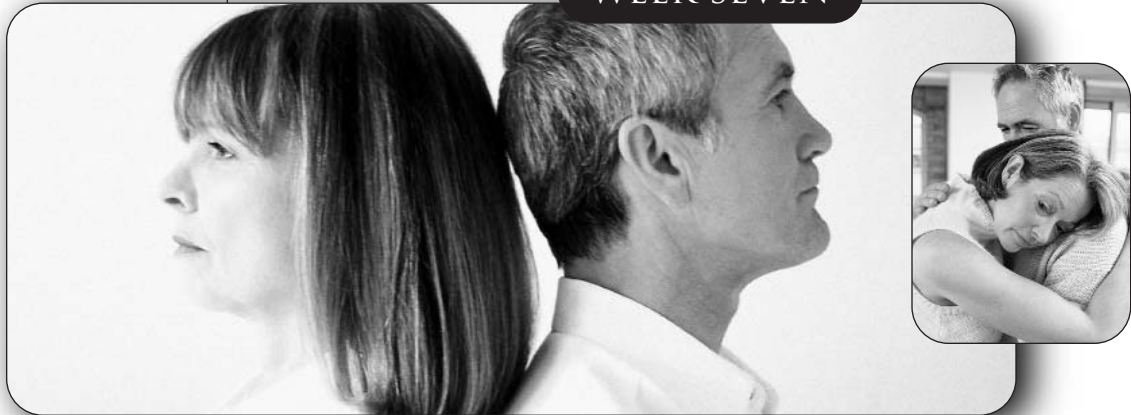


Forgiveness

S E M E S T E R O N E

WEEK SEVEN



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I. What is Forgiveness?

A. Forgiveness is not.....

1. _____, denying, or overlooking the wrong
2. _____ wrong doing (there is a difference between excusing and grace giving)
3. _____ of the other person's responsibility.
 - a. It is the responsibility of the one who did the hurting to take responsibility for what s/he said or did that was hurtful.
 - b. If the issue is with your spouse – both can take responsibility for the current state of the marriage – but the hurtful action must be owned
 - c. No one “made” you hurt your spouse
4. _____
 - a. As healing happens, feelings of hurt, pain and grief will lessen

b. You will probably be sensitive where you have been hurt. If your scar gets touched, you will be reminded of the pain and hurt. The sadness will resurface.

5. _____ of the marriage

a. Forgiveness could well be the open door that leads to healing – but trust must be rebuilt for restoration to occur

B. Forgiveness is....

1. A _____ of your will—a decision to give up your perceived or actual right to get even with or hold in debt someone who has wronged you. (Matt. 18:23-27)
2. Resolving to live with the _____ of the other person's wrong doing.
3. No longer _____ them in your own heart or to others (cheap shots, snide comments to others, bitter, cynical thoughts).

II. Principles of Forgiveness

- A. Forgiveness is a _____. (I am willing to be willing to be willing...to forgive).
- B. Forgiveness is often in various _____. (As layers of pain, anger, or consequences surface, another layer of forgiveness is needed. Recognizing this helps push us through the “stuck-ness”).
- C. True forgiveness isn't _____ and therefore isn't _____. Forgiving simply because you feel obliged to do so as a Christian – or told to by a church – isn't healthy, helpful, and may actually set you back more.

III. Why Forgive?

- A. God offers _____ forgiveness. Ephesians 1:7, 8. “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.”



B. God has given us _____ so we may extend it to others. (Colossians 3:13) “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

C. For _____ sake!

1. The goal is freedom in your own heart! Psalm 32:3-5 “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long...my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity...and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”
2. It is key to your own emotional healing. Colossians 3:15 “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...”

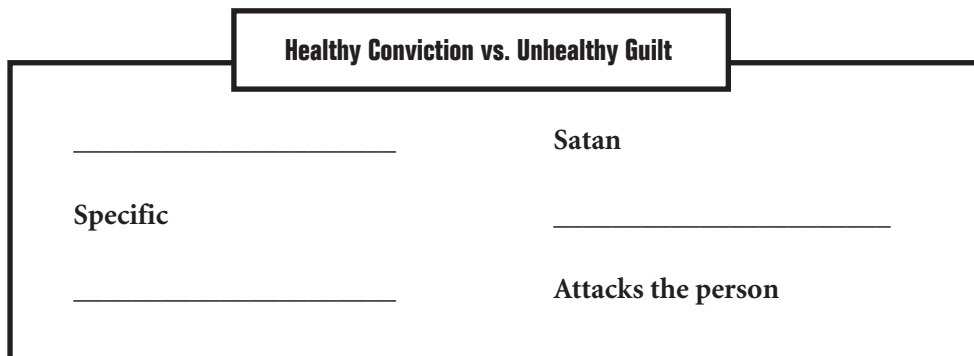
D. Because it is key for _____ to begin (in that moment, that conversation, that relationship)

E. _____ not to forgive leads to bitterness, emotional and physical pain, increased resentment, increased hopelessness in marriage, and increased separation from God.

IV. Forgiving Yourself

A. Romans 8:1: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

B. What is the difference between healthy conviction of sin and unhealthy guilt?





Healthy Conviction vs. Unhealthy Guilt

Repentance

**Comfort ("I am forgiven.
I am loved.")**

Alienation/Isolation

Works

C. A healthy confession of sin...

1. Agree with God that you have sinned (It helps to name the sin specifically).
2. Thank God that He has already forgiven you (Tell God, "I receive Your forgiveness for...").
3. Ask God if there is someone you need to ask forgiveness from – or go to for help.

V. Forgiving Others

A. Forgiving means that we actively choose to give up our grudge despite the severity of the injustice done to us (Ephesians 4:32)

B. Make a _____ of those who have sinned against you, offended you in some way, or whom you have negative feelings toward for any reason. Then, walk through the following process in prayer with God or with a trusted, mature friend for each person and situation on the list.

1. _____ your hurt, anger, and any other emotion. It is important for you not to minimize how you truly feel or to rationalize why the person did what they did.





2. _____ for God's perspective on yourself, the other person(s), and the situation (Psalm 139:23-24)
3. _____ to God any sin of resentment, bitterness, self-pity, etc.
4. _____ the forgiveness process. This may be a willful choice at this point. We don't have to feel loving toward them to say to God...
 - a. "Because of Your forgiveness to me, God, I forgive _____ (name the person) for _____ (name the offense).
 - b. Or... "Because of Your forgiveness to me, God, I am willing to be willing to forgive _____ for _____
5. _____ God to heal you emotionally. The emotional healing is almost always a process that doesn't happen overnight.
6. _____ God if you need to share with the person involved (if it is not your spouse).
7. If the issue is with your spouse...
 - a. After you have first done this work inwardly...
 - i. Schedule a meeting to discuss the specific issue.
 - ii. Identify the hurtful issue.
 - iii. Use the dialogue wheel to explore the pain related to the issue.
 - iv. Offender takes ownership of the wrongdoing: "I was wrong."
 - v. Offender shares sorrow for the wrongdoing: "I am sorry."
 - vi. Offender asks for forgiveness: "Please forgive me."
(By asking, it frees spouse to forgive.)





vii. Offended agrees to forgive: “I forgive you” and commits the event to the past.

viii. Offender responds affirmingly: “I love you,” “I commit to...”

VI. Take some time to process what we've talked about tonight...

A. Is there an issue about which you need to forgive yourself?

B. Whom do you need to forgive? For what? Where are you in that process?



C. From whom do you need to ask forgiveness? How do you feel about that? Where do you go from here?

D. Have you prayed to receive the forgiveness of God that is made available to us through Christ? Where are you in that process?



APPLICATION QUESTIONS

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1. What was it like to write? Were you able to get in touch with your feelings? Sad? Angry? Scared?
2. How do you feel about possibly sharing your answers with your spouse?
3. How do you feel about asking your spouse for forgiveness?
4. If you are struggling with not being able to ask for forgiveness, reflect on what makes it difficult for you.
5. What has happened in the past when you have asked for forgiveness?
6. What memories from your family of origin do you have around giving and receiving forgiveness?
7. What do you need from your spouse that might make it easier to ask for forgiveness?
8. How about your ability to let go and forgive your spouse? What gets in the way and makes it difficult for you to forgive?
9. God offers forgiveness as a free gift for you to receive. Have you received His gift of forgiveness?



HOMework

OVER THIS NEXT WEEK, think about the people that you need to forgive in your life. Put their names on separate pieces of paper. Then for each person, go through the Awareness Wheel to explore your awareness around forgiveness. Write your awareness for each individual. Ask God to join you in this process and to give you the strength to forgive each person.

1. The issue would be the hurt that happened.
2. Write down the facts. What happened? What did the person say or do that was hurtful? Write what happened out as completely as you need.
3. Write down your feelings. Don't minimize. Feel the sadness, anger and/or scare. Note your physical responses, the tears that accompany sadness; the tightness in your stomach and the desire to lash out and fight, with anger; the tightness in your chest and shoulders, with scare.
4. Write down your thoughts. Realize that your thoughts have probably run wild. Again, don't minimize and rationalize. Here is where you will discover your "hate" and "bitterness" and "resentment." Notice the negative judgments you place onto the person who hurt you.
5. Notice also the negative judgments that you have about yourself. Are you aware of "self-

pity" and "self-hate," that somehow you deserved your hurt? Here is where your "core beliefs" will surface, messages about your own poor self-esteem, that you are not OK.

6. Write down your wants/needs. Think back to what happened. You were probably at a vulnerable place when you were hurt. What were you aware of needing instead of the hurt you received? What could have been different?
7. Write down your actions. What did you do in response to being hurt? How did you cope?

Now that you are aware of your process, what you went through when you were hurt, the challenge will be to work through that hurt. You will need to work on the thinking part of the wheel and separate the hurt from the person who hurt you. A helpful process might be to go through the awareness wheel again and try to see things from the other person's perspective. Seeing things from the other person's perspective does not make what he or she did to you OK or "right," but what he or she did might make sense. The person who hurt you is a broken, hurting and needy person. His or her criticism, contempt or abuse, comes out of a needy and broken place. Can you forgive? Can you be willing to forgive? Can you be willing to be willing to forgive?





HOMework (CONT.)

1. Ask God to help you gain His perspective on yourself, the other person and the situation.
2. Confess to God any sin of resentment, bitterness, self-pity or hatred.
3. Forgive the person. This may be a willful choice at this point. You do not have to feel loving toward the other person in order to say to God, "Because of Your forgiveness to me, God, I forgive _____ (name of person), for _____ (name the offenses)." You might need to forgive yourself and forgive God, as well.
4. Ask for God to heal you emotionally. The emotional healing is usually a process. It will not happen overnight.
5. Pray for the person regularly.
6. Ask God if you need to go and share with the person involved. This is only after there has been some emotional healing and you definitely feel led by God to talk to the person.

Coming together is the last step of the process. Here is where your dialogue skills are very important.

1. Share your process. Share your awareness wheel.
2. Ask for the other to paraphrase until the other person understands the hurt and pain that you experienced.
3. Ask for what you need from the other person. You cannot make the other person acknowledge, confess or repent, but you can ask.
4. Your work is to forgive and let God do the work in the other person's life.





DEVOTIONS

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START THE FIRST devotion tomorrow and continue with one devotion each day until we meet next week. Ask yourself and God what these mean for you.

DAY 1 / Matthew 6:14, 15

What are some areas that you are holding off forgiving your spouse?

DAY 2 / 1 John 1:9

Can you own those areas of unforgiveness and acknowledge them before God?

DAY 3 / Colossians 3:12, 13

Ask God to give you His heart of compassion.

DAY 4 / 2 Timothy 1:7

If fear gets in the way of you letting go of unforgiveness, ask God for strength.

DAY 5 / Romans 6:23

Holding on to unforgiveness will only result in increased hardness of heart and separation from your spouse and from God.

DAY 6 / Romans 12:19-21

Give God the right to judge. Let go of your right to punish.

DAY 7 / Romans 5:1-11

Experience the peace and joy that God offers, even in the midst of suffering as you give your unforgiveness to Him.

NOTE: Please notify your small group leader if you need a copy of the Bible.

