



LIVING A LIFESTYLE OF FORGIVENESS

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

(Mark 11:25-26)

Lesson Purpose

God asks us to forgive, in order to make our heart fit to receive His forgiveness. In order for our prayer to be effectual, we must be in the will of God. If we have unforgiveness or offense toward others in our heart, we are not able to receive God's forgiveness. Thus we will not be in the perfect will of God, and we will not be open to receive the healing Jesus died to provide us with! The purpose of this lesson is to expose the bait of Satan; the subtle way he captures people into bondage through offense and unforgiveness. This lesson reveals symptoms of unforgiveness or offense, and teaches what God's Word says about how to live a lifestyle of forgiveness.

Foundation One

Answered prayer and God's blessings are directly connected to the condition of our heart. A heart of offense or unforgiveness is a barrier to God's forgiveness, His ability to answer our prayers, and to manifest His healing within our bodies.

Matthew 6:14-15 (The Message)

In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part.

Foundation Two

What does it really mean to forgive? As we search the deeper meaning of forgiveness, know that this is the way God forgives us! And His direction for us is to forgive others in the same way that He forgives us!

Forgive (G863 – aphiemi)

† to acquit (set free from a charge of an offense)

† to release

† to give up resentment

† to let it drop

† to recall (to annul by taking back); to annul (reduce to nothing, to make ineffective or inoperative, to declare or make legally void)

Read Colossians 3:13

Christ is our example! Forgive as He forgives!

Foundation Three

When Jesus was in human flesh on this earth, He taught about forgiveness!

Read Mark 11:25-26

1. What does Jesus teach right before this scripture on forgiveness? Why?
2. What is the connection between our forgiveness and God's forgiveness?

Read Luke 17:3-4

3. What does our Master Jesus teach us to do if someone comes against us repeatedly?

Read Matthew 18:21-35

4. Jesus uses a parable to teach about forgiveness. The servant owed the king 10,000 talents, which is equal to about \$10,000,000! What did the king do when his heart was filled with compassion?
5. That same servant was owed about a hundred denarii by one of his peers, which is equal to about \$20! He had this man thrown in prison until he could pay the debt. How did the king react?

Jesus, our compassionate King, removed our huge debt from us! He paid the price in full for all the debt of all mankind who receive Him as Lord and Savior! But often times, we are like the servant in this parable. Someone hurts us deeply, and we choose not to forgive them. We feel that we are owed retaliation as a result of the hurt that was inflicted upon us. What a small act it is to let go of that resentment; especially when we compare our hurt to the immensity of how our Savior Jesus suffered for His people! God expects us to forgive, to let go of resentment, to simply let it drop!

Foundation Four

Who does unforgiveness actually hurt?

1. Who does the world believe that unforgiveness hurts?
2. What is the truth?

Read Ephesians 6:12

3. Who are we actually wrestling against when we struggle with opposition in the world?

Foundation Five

Offense is a subtle bait of the enemy, set in a trap that has the ability to snare us in the deadly jaws of satan, the enemy of our soul.

Read Luke 17:1

Offence (G4625 – skandalon)

† the trigger of a trap

† an injury, insult or mistreatment, small or large, that becomes a stumbling block in our life and hinders our relationship with others and with God

Facts about offences:

1. Offense is one of satan's oldest tricks to cause division in God's kingdom. Offense provides satan with a foothold into our lives; an open door to bring destruction or to prevent healing. When we allow bitterness and offense to take root in our souls, we not only hurt ourselves, but we also hinder the power of God from being released in our lives!
2. Offense itself is not deadly – if it stays in the trap. But if we pick it up and consume it and feed on it in our hearts, then we have become offended. Often this happens so subtly and so gradually that we don't even realize we have taken the bait. We are so focused on the wrong that was done to us, that we are blinded to the fact that we have been entrapped by the enemy. (From *The Bait of Satan*, by John Bevere)

3. Seeds of offense sprout into roots of bitterness or hard-heartedness. With each small offense we take, we gradually erect a fence, post by post and plank by plank. (Offence = of + fence) Over time, that fence causes division in our relationship with others and in our relationship with God!

Foundation Six

Let's take a look at symptoms of unforgiveness or offense. It is possible that you may not realize that you are actually in a state of unforgiveness or offense. Take time to ponder the following symptoms of unforgiveness. They may lead you to the realization of a stumbling block that has blocked your healing or hindered your prayers.

1. Are you angry?

One of the main signs that we are dealing with unforgiveness in our lives is ongoing anger toward someone. We may be irritated or aggravated whenever we're in this person's presence.

2. Are you keeping score?

Another sign of offense or unforgiveness is a tendency to keep track of offenses and compare yourself to others. **Read Luke 15:11-32**, the parable of the prodigal son. Pay close attention to how the "good" son reacts when his prodigal brother returns and receives forgiveness from his father.

3. Are you thinking about the offense and talking about it all the time?

We will never get over the things that have hurt and offended us if we're always keeping them fresh in our hearts and minds by thinking and talking about them. It's a choice you make – you have to forgive and forget about it *on purpose*.

Foundation Seven

Are you ready to make the choice to forgive, to let go of resentment or offense? God will give us the ability to forgive those who have hurt us, when we choose to receive His grace to love them. We must choose to forgive others like Christ has forgiven us. When we make this choice, we will see evidence of God's power in our lives through answered prayers and blessings.

1. How do I choose to forgive, when I've been so very hurt?

† Search your heart for any unforgiveness, resentment, bitterness, or offense in your heart. Pray to the Father, asking that He reveal to you any roots of unforgiveness, and to remove any veil that may be clouding your vision.

† Rid yourself of the sin of unforgiveness. Confess the sin and ask God for His forgiveness. **1 John 1:9, Psalm 103:12**

† Repent – Sincerely desire to change and to make amends if at all possible with those whom you have sinned against. Focus on reconciliation rather than resolution. Reconciliation centers around the relationship, while resolution centers around the problem. But when you focus on repairing the relationship, the problem often loses its significance. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 158.

2. What if I still feel anger or guilt after I go through the process of forgiveness?

† Be confident that you've done your part! The chasm between you and your heavenly Father has been repaired! Trust that God's Word is true, that *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9); and that *as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us* (Psalm 103:12)!

† He will heal the wound or hurt which led to the unforgiveness in the first place. Healing starts in the spiritual realm, and moves into the physical realm. You may still feel emotions of resentment or guilt. But don't go by emotions. Your sins are forgiven and forgotten!

† Continue to speak of your forgiveness out loud. Say "I have forgiven _____." "I have let go of my offense toward _____." It is done! As we speak, our soul (mind, will and emotions) will align with our spirit, which has already been healed of the sin of unforgiveness!

For Personal Reflection

1. Search your heart for any unforgiveness, resentment, bitterness, or offense in your heart.
2. If necessary, confess the sin of unforgiveness, resentment, bitterness, or offense and ask God for His forgiveness.
3. Write your words of forgiveness down here. (Consider sharing these words with the person(s) involved.)
4. Your sin has been forgiven and forgotten by your Father! He will heal any wound that was attached! It is done!

Questions:

Write down any questions or concerns that you have and be sure to ask them at our next class.

Prayer requests: