



Week 4

Day 1:

Read 1 John 2:3-6 and Mark 11:25

...“whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.” This requires us to think deeply about how we are living, not just what we know. In the Devo from week 1 we were asked to consider and begin to identify, specific ways in which we have divorced the teachings of Jesus and how he lived, from how we are actually living. Unforgiveness is one of the most common ways we do this. We gratefully receive and seek God’s forgiveness but pull back from extending forgiveness to others. We have ample “reasons” as to why we can’t possibly forgive despite Jesus’ clear teaching and example that if we are following Him, we must. Think about everything you know about Christianity...is there any way to even attempt to approach understanding the Christian faith without forgiveness? We need to do everything we can to get this right in our lives; unforgiveness affects every aspect of our lives, internally, with others, and most profoundly with God.

Take a few minutes to reflect. Is there someone you are angry with, someone who has wronged you in some way, people who you believe owe you something because of what they have done. Pray for an open heart to receive whatever God wishes to reveal to you this week. Pray that you will see clearly any attitudes you may have that are seeds to unforgiveness. Take a big step today...say a prayer for those you previously identified.

Day 2:

Read Matthew 18:15-27 and Matthew 6:15

Notice the servant came to the king with the understanding of a debt being settled in one of 2 ways; payment or punishment. This is the currency of the kingdom of this world. Look back at verse 23, what kingdom does Jesus compare the king’s way of settlement to? The way of pardon; this is the way of the Kingdom of God. Like the servant, as followers of Christ, God deals with us in the currency of “pardon”. Now look at v. 28-35. When the servant chose to demand payment or punishment (returned to the “currency” of this world) what happened to him? As Travis mentioned in the weekend message the servant removed himself from the currency of the Kingdom of God (pardon) and placed himself back in the currency of payment or punishment. What does this say about us when we have been forgiven and yet do not forgive? Is this something we should take lightly? Jesus has called us to forgive as (or in the same way) we have been forgiven. As we forgive the guilty we become a part of bringing the Kingdom of God to our world. Forgiveness is one of the most impactful ways we are light in the darkness because it is completely counter-cultural. Consider these questions: Have I allowed unforgiveness to gain a foothold in my life? Is the world of payment or punishment where I want to live? What kingdom am I furthering? Am I willing to usher in the Kingdom of God through pardon or am I furthering the kingdom of this world by dismissing Jesus’ teachings as something that simply doesn’t work in our world?

Day 3:

Read Mark 11:24-26

Often we get “bogged down” in the work of forgiving by wanting the person to acknowledge what they have done, or to understand it was wrong. Or perhaps we can’t seem to get to the place where we “feel” like forgiving. Read through the following statements about forgiveness:

Forgiveness ... * is not a feeling * doesn’t mean excusing the wrong or denying it happened * isn’t the same as reconciling, the offender can be forgiven without reestablishing the relationship * isn’t conditional. It isn’t, “if they do this, or that,” then I will forgive * isn’t about changing the other person, their actions or their behavior * isn’t dependent on the other person acknowledging the wrong or even apologizing * isn’t the same as trust-forgiveness is freely given, trust must be earned and rebuilt. * is a decision * is a way of life, not to be negotiated on an “offense by offense” basis * is an issue of obedience * is meant to become a pattern of living * is one of the greatest evidences that your own salvation is real
As you read through these, which ones do you struggle with accepting? Have you found yourself locked in to one of these thoughts causing you to be unable or unwilling to forgive? How do the truths of these statements change your thinking and understanding about forgiveness? Be honest with yourself and before God about your thoughts of hesitation in embracing his truths. Pray: God, I confess that when I’m hurt I want to hold on to it. Letting go feels like pretending it never happened. It seems like the only way to overcome the hurt is to get even or exact some kind of punishment, but you say the only way to overcome is to forgive. Help me to trust Your ways and Your wisdom. Help me to choose forgiveness.

Day 4:

Read Hebrews 12:14-15

We have discovered that if we are to be obedient and to receive forgiveness ourselves, we must forgive.

Forgiveness: “To grant free pardon and to give up all claim on account of an offense or debt” Oxford English Dictionary **Pardon:** “To release a person from liability for an offense” “an act of officially saying that someone who was judged to be guilty of a crime will be allowed to go free and will not be punished” Merriam-Webster Dictionary

When you forgive, do you consider the debt cancelled or do you find yourself holding on to the sense that they still owe you something? Forgiveness means the debt has been paid and nothing more is owed to anyone. Read through the following statements. Do you recognize any of these indicators that you are holding on to unforgiveness?

I often replay in my mind the incident(s) that hurt me.

When I think of a particular person or situation, I still feel angry.

I try not to think about the person, event, or circumstance which caused me so much pain.

I have a subtle, secret desire to see this person pay for what he/she did to me.

Deep in my heart, I wouldn’t mind if something bad happened to the person(s) who hurt me.

I often find myself telling others how this person has hurt me.

A lot of my conversations (both in my head and to others) revolve around this situation.

Whenever his/her name comes up, I’m more likely to say something negative than positive about him/her.

Holding on to unforgiveness breeds discontent, bitterness and defiles us and those around us. Pray day three’s prayer.

Day 5:

Read Psalm 32

Unforgiveness leads us to become people who approach life expecting that everyone is out to wrong us, become angry at the slightest offense (perceived or real) and quickly move from hurt to anger and resentment.

Who do you need to forgive? Look back at Day 1, who came to mind? Take some time to reflect on what God has shown you this week. Ask God to give you strength and courage to forgive your past debtors, and those who will wrong you in the future.