

WOUNDED

Forgiveness needs more than a



Wounded: Part 2

Small Group Material

Leader Guide

Our Highest Hope

March 13th, 2016

Bottom Line: Forgiveness frees you from vengeance and vindication.

Study Verses: Romans 12:16-19, Psalm 17:2, Isaiah 53:1,5,10-11

Define The Win: Participants would recognize that forgiveness and reconciliation are not tied together - forgiveness can take place without the relationship being restored. Participants would also pinpoint the places where they are seeking vengeance and vindication to heal old wounds on their own.

Key Points

- Being right isn't about vindication, but restoration.
- Forgiveness and reconciliation are two different things.
- Forgiveness doesn't eliminate the consequences or the cost.
- To forgive is an act of liberation and a way to freedom.
- Forgiveness abolishes the scales completely.
- Focus on forgiveness first.
- We must understand the implications forgiveness has on our own lives before we deal with the implications it has on our relationships.

ENCOUNTER

“To forgive another person from the heart is an act of liberation. We set that person free from the negative bonds that exist between us. We say, “I no longer hold your offense against you.” But there is more. We also free ourselves from the burden of being the “offended one.” As long as we do not forgive those who have wounded us, we carry them with us, or worse, pull them as a heavy load. The great temptation is to cling in anger to our enemies and then define ourselves as being offended and wounded by them. Forgiveness, therefore, liberates not only the other but also ourselves. It is the way to freedom for the children of God.” -Henri Nouwen

- What is your initial reaction to the quote above? Do you view forgiveness as an act of liberation? Why or why not? What makes you answer in the way that you do?
- What causes you to hesitate to extend forgiveness?
- How have you allowed your wounds to define you? Where do you still see yourself as the offended one?

LEADER INSIGHT: Forgiveness doesn't seem fair. Instead of forgiveness we want justice. The person who caused us pain must be held accountable for their offense. Our desire for the offender to accept responsibility before we extend forgiveness holds our freedom hostage, unable to live life fully and freely. Forgiving others without witnessing what we believe to be vindication for the offense feels oppressive and even unjust. We don't see forgiveness as liberation, we see it as an escape clause for the offender. However, extending forgiveness to those who have offended us is a true act of liberation - not for the offender, but for us. When un-forgiveness remains in our heart, we wound ourselves all over again. We are bound by our past. It is impossible to walk in freedom when we are shackled to the need to vindicate ourselves. Forgiveness is where freedom is found. His wounds bring us wholeness. Being right isn't about vindication, but restoration.

FORMATION

“O Lord, deliver me from this lust of always vindicating myself.” -St. Augustine

- Read Romans 12:16-19. How does this passage speak to forgiveness and reconciliation being two different things? Why should our willingness to forgive be independent from the response of the offender?

- Read Psalm 17:2 and the quote from St. Augustine. How does God’s forgiveness free you from seeking vengeance and vindication? What is the allure to vindicate ourselves?
- Read Isaiah 53:1,5,10-11. According to this passage, what causes God anguish and what brings Him satisfaction? How does God shouldering the weight of our sin pave the way for forgiveness?

LEADER INSIGHT: When we separate forgiveness from reconciliation, we can look at forgiveness long enough and closely enough to experience the freedom and the healing we find through it. The restoration of the relationship is secondary. We must understand the implications forgiveness has on our own lives before we deal with the implications it has on our relationships. God’s forgiveness seems too good to be true. He shouldered the weight of the very thing that caused him anguish, which was our sin. He understood that something was broken and needed to be fixed. It was the redemption of our sin that brought him satisfaction and brought us freedom. Walking in this freedom enables us to extend forgiveness to others. Forgiveness paves the way to trust but it doesn’t guarantee it. It also doesn’t eliminate the cost or the consequence. At its core, forgiveness frees us from the need for vengeance and vindication. We no longer hold the offense against the other person. We wish them no ill will. Because we don’t know how restoration is going to look, we wonder if forgiveness is even possible. Yet, all God is asking us to do is our part by trusting Him and extending forgiveness. There will be some relationships where restoration and reconciliation are impossible. There are others where boundaries must be established. In all cases forgiveness is available.

EXPRESSION

- Where are you seeking vengeance and vindication?
- Why do you want to be right in this situation?
- What would it look like for you to focus on forgiveness first and worry about the details of the relationship later?

LEADER INSIGHT: Allow group members to expose their wounds, regardless of how fresh they may be. Help them articulate how vengeance and vindication are driving their actions and thought life. The most important question in the Expression block is “why do you want to be right?” The ‘why’ always drives behavior. By recognizing the ‘why’ we can better identify the areas in our heart that need God’s healing.