

WOUNDED

Forgiveness needs more than a



Wounded: Part 1

Small Group Material

Leader Guide

The Biggest Problem

March 13th, 2016

Bottom Line: Forgiveness frees us from the pressure to perform and empowers us to love.

Study Verses: Isaiah 53:1-6, Luke 5:17-26, 1 John 1:8-10 and Colossians 3:12-14

Key Points

- Forgiveness paves the path for trust. It doesn't guarantee a restored relationship but it does guarantee a restored soul.
- Forgiveness is a choice to resume a relationship.
- Forgiveness is the way we can be right.
- We have found the right solution to the wrong problem.
- Unforgiveness leaves us under the pressure to measure up and make up.

ENCOUNTER

- As we embark on a 6-week series on forgiveness, we must first get on the same page with our language. How would you define forgiveness?
- Fill in the blanks: (1) I find it most challenging to forgive when _____. (2) I find it most challenging to receive forgiveness when _____.
- What makes us feel the need to earn our forgiveness in our human relationships or our relationship with God?

LEADER INSIGHT: For the Encounter section, your goal is to understand how each member defines forgiveness and where they wrestle with extending and accepting it in their own lives. Don't try to solve or fix those places where unforgiveness reigns. Begin a dialogue as to why this resistance exists.

FORMATION

- Read 1 John 1:8-10. How do we misinterpret this passage and create an apology theology? What is the danger in this mindset and how does it push us to perform?
- Read Luke 5:17-26. How were the crippled man's friends looking for the right solution to the wrong problem? What did Jesus want them to understand about what their greatest need was?
- Read Isaiah 53:1-6. How does this passage speak to forgiveness not being free, but coming at cost? How did Jesus absorb the debt we owed? What does it mean that "we like sheep have gone astray"?

LEADER INSIGHT: We arrange our lives around what we perceive to be our greatest need. We want our life to work well. Happiness, peace, being well-liked and successful. These are just some of the things we pursue to fill what we think will make us content. However, when we attain these things but find that we still fall short, we look for another way to reconcile our need. What we don't realize is that we are looking for the right solution to the wrong problem. Just like the crippled man in Luke 5, we don't understand what we truly need. His friends thought his problem was his legs, when Jesus was more concerned about his heart. To heal his legs only required Jesus speaking a word while healing his heart meant that Jesus would have to die. The same is true for us and our broken lives. Our greatest need is having our relationship with God restored and attempting to do this on our own is impossible. As a result, we take on an apology theology where we attempt to earn back our standing with God. For every mistake we make,

there is a confession. We attempt to measure up and make up for the sin in our lives. This pressure to perform is exhausting. The cost was too great to pay through our own self- effort. Throughout scripture, the metaphor of cancelling a debt is used to explain what forgiveness entails. When there is an outstanding balance, someone must pay the price. Either the person in debt must make amends or the individual who is owed must soak up the loss. It costs somebody something. Seeking and extending forgiveness can be a costly endeavor on our part, but when compared to the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf it is just a drop in a bucket. The punishment that brought us peace was placed on His shoulders. When we do not understand that who we are in Christ is due solely to God's grace, forgiving others will never take root as a habit in our lives. Failing to recognize the hand that has been extended to us by God will keep us from offering our hand to others after they fall down. Our ability to forgive is simply an extension of the grace we have received.

EXPRESSION

- Where are you struggling with the pressure to measure up and make up?
- Forgiveness is a choice to resume a relationship. What relationship has been damaged due to unforgiveness?
- Read Colossians 3:12-14. What would it look like for you to begin to develop an overall orientation towards forgiveness? If we are going to be in relationships with others, why is forgiveness necessary?

LEADER INSIGHT: Forgiveness requires a decision to be made when someone hurts or causes pain through their words or actions. Will you pass over the offense by showing compassion or refuse to forgive and let bitterness reign? We are confronted with this dilemma on a daily basis thanks to the messiness of humanity. Some moments we are the offended while other times we are the offender. This comes with the territory of being in relationship with others. Unfortunately, our humanity makes us hesitate in extending, as well as accepting, forgiveness. The idea of cancelling out a debt when the wounds seem so fresh makes us cringe. What causes us to flinch is something deep down inside reminding us about the great cost of forgiveness. It could be an affair, divorce, abuse, gossip, dishonesty or hurtful words. Our story might be distinctive, but the struggle to forgive others or to ask for forgiveness on our behalf is not unique. If we do not extend grace, it demonstrates our lack of understanding God's forgiveness, which stands as the crux of the gospel. Our message of love and mercy then falls on deaf ears. Forgiven people are to be forgiving people.