

2022



UNFORGIVENESS

FROM "TRIGGERS" SERIES

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Triggers are statements, situations and circumstances that elicit an emotion or automatic reaction which causes us to engage in an erratic behavior that is sabotaging and extremely destructive. - Dr. David Conner

Week 1, we dealt with the trigger, anger. We learned that it is a feeling that someone owes us and the result of not getting what we want. The antidote to anger is forgiveness. What happens when we are triggered by unforgiveness?

Unforgiveness is a state of emotional and mental distress that results from a delayed response in forgiving an offender. **Unforgiveness** is toxic. *Let it go!*

FIVE FACTS ABOUT FORGIVENESS

1. FORGIVENESS IS A FRUIT OF THE KINGDOM.

Four Greek words for forgiveness: **Release** from bondage or imprisonment, **send away**, **divorce**, **pardon** of sins (letting them go as if they had never been committed), remission of the penalty.

Matthew 6:14-15 NIV - [14] For if you forgive others their trespasses [their reckless and willful sins], your heavenly Father will also forgive you. [15] But if you do not forgive others [nurturing your hurt and anger with the result that it interferes with your relationship with God], then your Father will not forgive your trespasses.

- Scripture teaches us that it is healthy to forgive. The more you forgive the better you'll live. It's important to let it go because unforgiveness is a stronghold.

Do you bear the fruit of forgiveness? What prevents you from forgiving the way God forgives you?

John 13:34-35 NIV - [34] A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. [35] By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."

- Love is the only thing God distinguishes that makes you a disciple. Love requires forgiveness because the people you love will need your forgiveness.

Consider your relationships with those you love. Are you harboring any unforgiveness? What does our unforgiveness tell us about how we understand and fulfill Jesus' commandment?

2. FORGIVENESS ORIGINATES FROM GOD

1 John 1:9 NIV - [9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Everyone wants FORGIVENESS but few know how to FORGIVE.

Luke 23:34 NIV - "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

- You forgive in advance because you're trying to be like Christ. Let God deal with those who mishandled you and choose not to hold anything against them.

What are some things you can do to help you forgive in advance? What are some scriptures you can use to assist you in imitating Christ's model of forgiveness?

Jesus knew this was a hard concept to understand so he gave them a story - a parable.

A parable is a SECULAR story with SPIRITUAL Truth. There are a total of 36 parables in the Bible. Let's look at Matthew 18:21-35.

Matthew 18:21-35 MSG - At that point Peter got up the nerve to ask, "Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?"

Matthew 18:22 MSG - Jesus replied, "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven."

- Stop keeping record and just forgive. Keeping score hurts you.

What if God kept a record of your offenses? How can His example help you interact with others? What does this teach you about your interactions with others?

Matthew 18:23-25 MSG - "The kingdom of God is like a king who decided to square accounts with his servants. As he got under way, one servant was brought before him who had run up a debt of a hundred thousand dollars. He couldn't pay up, so the king ordered the man, along with his wife, children, and goods, to be auctioned off at the slave market.

Matthew 18:26-27 MSG - "The poor wretch threw himself at the king's feet and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' Touched by his plea, the king let him off, erasing the debt.

How would you act if a great debt was forgiven? Compare that reaction with how you praise God for your sins being forgiven. How much value is it to you?

3. FORGIVENESS IS NOT A FEELING.

Forgiveness is a choice we make through a decision of our will, and it is motivated by obedience to God and his command to forgive.

Matthew 6:14 NIV - For if you forgive others their trespasses [their reckless and willful sins], your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

- You don't feel forgiveness until after you are forgiven.

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3

- "In my hurt, forgiveness feels like a decision to reward my enemy. But in the kingdom, forgiveness is a gift I give myself from the one I received."
- Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. It is a scar, not a wound.

Have you ever asked God for forgiveness and not felt forgiven? What does this teach you about your feelings toward forgiveness?

Matthew 18:28 MSG - "The servant was no sooner out of the room when he came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him ten dollars. He seized him by the throat and demanded, 'Pay up. Now!'

- Don't let offenses make you act out. God forgave you, so you must forgive.

Do you have a tendency to hold others' faults against them? What does harboring unforgiveness tell us about how we understand God's forgiveness of our own sins?

4. FORGIVENESS IS FOR OTHERS.

Matthew 18:29-31 MSG - "The poor wretch threw himself down and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' But he wouldn't do it. He had him arrested and put in jail until the debt was paid. When the other servants saw this going on, they were outraged and brought a detailed report to the king.

- We were not born with unforgiveness - it is a learned behavior.
 - Life has taught us to carry and wear our grudges.
- We are often blinded by our behavior. We need relationships that can be mirrors.

What grudge have you been carrying? Who is it against? How is carrying unforgiveness impacting your life? What will it take for you to release it?

Time does not heal all wounds. In fact, time further worsens and infects emotional pain. Unforgiveness is like carrying around a huge weight. The longer we carry a grudge, the heavier the burden becomes.

LET IT GO! Forgiveness gives you power because it allows you to control your feelings.

Matthew 6:14 AMP - [14] For if you forgive others their trespasses [their reckless and willful sins], your heavenly Father will also forgive you. [15] But if you do not forgive others [nurturing your hurt and anger with the result that it interferes with your relationship with God], then your Father will not forgive your trespasses.

- Don't wear unforgiveness as a badge of honor. Unforgiveness is a mental, physical and spiritual prison. It comes between you and God. Don't get stuck in your pain.
- Forgiveness sets the prisoner free - "You."

Have you been imprisoned by your unforgiveness? Who do you need to forgive? How long has it been since the offense happened? How will forgiving them change your life?

5. FORGIVENESS IS FOR US.

Matthew 18:32-35 MSG - "The king summoned the man and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave your entire debt when you begged me for mercy. Shouldn't you be compelled to be merciful to your fellow servant who asked for mercy?' The king was furious and put the screws to the man until he paid back his entire debt. And that's exactly what my Father in heaven is going to do to each one of you who doesn't forgive unconditionally anyone who asks for mercy."

- Unforgiveness is trying to rob you of your next level.
- God extends forgiveness to you so that you will extend forgiveness to others. Forgiveness opens the door to your freedom.

What is preventing you from truly forgiving those who hurt you? What opportunities are being withheld from you because of your unforgiveness? Have you intentionally spent time in prayer asking God to help you heal and forgive?

"When we forgive evil we do not excuse it, we do not tolerate it, we do not smother it. We look the evil full in the face, call it what it is, let its horror shock and stun and enrage us, and only then do we forgive it." - Lewis B. Smedes

FORGIVING BRINGS HEALING

Forgiveness is best accomplished by following four steps:

- 1. Identify who you're angry with.**
- 2. Determine what they owe you.**
- 3. Cancel the debt.**
- 4. Dismiss the case.**

Reflect on a time in your life when you showed forgiveness towards someone. How did you feel after you released the hurt and anger? Do you still hold them to the offense?

DECLARATION

You can't have my future because you already had my past. I decided to let it go.

PRAYER

Father, Thank You for forgiving me of my sins. I have not always lived uprightly before You, yet You love me enough to erase my transgressions. You taught me how to handle the spirit of offense through how You responded to me. Thank You for extending the gift of freedom from hurt and pain caused by offenses so that I can extend the same love to others. Forgiveness is a powerful necessity in spiritual maturity, and I honor You for blessing me with a heart that is capable of forgiving. In Jesus' name, Amen!