

2022 Community Groups

WEEKLY GUIDE

Apr 24 - Community Guide

For the next several weeks our sermon series will focus on Five Good Fights Worth Fighting. This week Pastor Woody about the importance of forgiveness.

Community Prayer:

Lord, As we move out of Easter week we first want to pause to thank you once again for the incredible gift of salvation through Jesus. It is only from this vantage point that we are able to truly offer forgiveness to others who have caused hurt and pain in our lives. Give us hearts that are filled with compassion as we interact with the people you have placed in our lives so that we might be quick to ask for forgiveness and faithful to offer forgiveness to others. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen

Opening Questions:

1. What are the social habits or behaviors of others that really irritate you?
2. Have you ever worked with or for someone who was a really difficult person? What was that like for you?

Exploration:

Pastor Woody started off by sharing a business article from Inc. Magazine, Super Rare Habit of Exceptionally Happy Workers: It may be your secret weapon to avoid conflict and restore peace at work.

Have you ever been hurt by the actions or words of someone in the workplace, like maybe an insensitive boss or a controlling colleague?

Anger, bitterness, utter disappointment or even vengeance may be par for the course after being thrown under the bus. But here's the thing: Allowing these feelings to persist can have devastating consequences for the person holding the grudge.

*Cutting through the conflict that is disrupting the workplace and causing things to boil over may, at times, require something super rare and counterintuitive in the cold and harsh business environment. Ready to be shocked? **The act of forgiveness.***

It is important to note that throughout this series as we talk about dealing with difficult people, we are not talking about extreme



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situations like violence or abuse. We are talking about the kinds of relational difficulties that happen in everyday life. We are going to need discernment and God's help in applying these topics to our lives. This is a one size fits "most" approach to relationships.

James 4: 1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

- Fights= a war, a battle, a dispute, strife
- Quarrels= contention, controversy
- Desires= lust, strong wish for pleasure
- Battle= to make a military expedition, to lead soldiers to war or battle, or to fight carnal inclinations

Fights, quarrels and battles all have military connotations. When our preferences are not shared by others around us it can be difficult to get along.

3. What are the most common topics that people in your life disagree on or fight about?
4. When you disagree with someone, how do you handle it? Are you quick to confront? Do you avoid the topic?

Matthew 18:15-20

It is not uncommon for people to avoid dealing with the sinful behavior of others. Many people choose to avoid the issue or the person, or get mad and combative, or simply gossip about it to other people. Jesus gives us clear guidance on dealing with the sins of our brothers and sisters in Christ. The goal and motivation must always be restoration and reconciliation.

- Go and talk about it 1 on 1 with the person
- Go with a small group of people to talk to the person
- Go to the church leaders

Read verse 20 out loud again

As we can see, the context for this verse is dealing with conflict and difficult relationships. We really do need each other in order to live in the kind of relational health that Jesus desires for us.

5. What experience have you had with confronting someone about sin in their lives?



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6. What experience have you had with someone confronting you about sin in your life?

Matthew 18:21

Peter asks a good question here. He knows the human condition and understands that we are all prone to make mistakes and even sin against others. We often keep doing the same thing and need to ask for forgiveness, again and again. So Peter asks how many times is enough.

It was common in those days for Jewish Rabbi's to teach that if someone sins against you, you should forgive them once, twice and even three times, but after that, no more. The common practice of the day was "Three strikes and you're out!" So Peter was probably trying to be generous in suggesting that it might be better to forgive up to 7 times. But Jesus quickly set him straight.

7. Have you ever struggled with offering forgiveness to someone? If you are willing, share about that with the group.

Matthew 18:22

Jesus is not doing some kind of fancy math here, he is basically giving a number that is impossible to keep up with. Then Jesus launches into a parable to help explain what this kind of forgiveness really looks like.

Matthew 18:23-35

8. Why do you think forgiveness is so difficult?
9. What are the things that have been difficult for you to forgive?

An unwillingness to show mercy may be evidence that you have never actually received mercy, or at least you are not living out of that reality at the moment.

It's important to keep in mind that forgiveness is not pretending nothing happened, but it is a pardon for guilt and condemnation.

- **Forgiveness is Not:** Trusting again
 - Trust must be rebuilt
- **Forgiveness is Not:** Forgetting
 - We can forgive even as we remember the pain we suffered
- **Forgiveness is Not:** Reconciliation
 - It is an interior discipline while reconciliation is an outward process



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- **Forgiveness is Not:** Dependent on changed behavior
 - It is given regardless of the posture or attitude of the other person

Colossians 3: 13-14 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Ephesians 4: 31-32 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

10. Is there anything you need to bring before God today to ask for forgiveness? (take a moment to prayerfully consider what you need forgiveness for)
11. Is there anything in your life that you want someone to forgive? If so, have you confessed those things and asked for forgiveness?
12. It is sometimes difficult to accept forgiveness and release the guilt and shame that we carry for things we have done. If this is true for you, share your struggle with the group and ask for their prayers.

Spend some time in prayer thanking God for the gift of forgiveness and ask for God's help in offering that forgiveness to others.

The Takeaway:

There are 2 Aspects of Forgiveness

- To seek forgiveness
 - From God
 - From someone you have wronged
- To give forgiveness
 - To someone who has wronged you
 - To yourself as you release shame and accept God's mercy

Those who have had **Mercy Given** can live a life that is **Mercy Driven**.

