

# onechurch

## bigIdea small group discussion



When you watch the original A-Team television show, you saw a lot of violence and explosions, but no one ever got hurt. Don't you wish your life was like that? If someone does something to you—you are treated unfairly and someone hurts you, that you could get back at them—maybe not by flipping their car over—you could get back at them by what you say and do, and no one would get hurt. No repercussions.

But life isn't like that. People regularly get hurt by the words and actions of others. When we decide to hold a grudge, or to get back at them, it just ends with more hurt and more resentment on our part.

**BIG IDEA:** When we don't forgive, it poisons us and poisons our relationships.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was one of the worst things you did as a child that you asked forgiveness for? What did you learn from your experience?
2. Is the idea of forgiveness difficult for you to understand? What part of it doesn't add up? Do you have an easier time receiving it, or giving it? Why do you think that is?
3. *Read Hebrews 12:15-15.* How is bitterness like a root? What are some similarities with bitterness and roots of weeds?
4. *Read Matthew 6:14-15 and Matthew 18:21-35.* Why is it so difficult to forgive those who have severely hurt us? What keeps you from practicing forgiveness?
5. How have you seen unforgiveness and bitterness hurt you?
6. When you think about the people you need to forgive, who comes to mind? What is keeping you from forgiving this person?
7. What can the forgiveness we have received from God teach us about forgiving those who hurt us?
8. *Read Matthew 5:43-44.* Why is prayer such a vital part of forgiving others? How did Jesus say we ought to treat our enemies? What did Jesus say we ought to do for those who persecute us?
9. What would have to happen in your heart in order for you to be able to pray for an enemy?
10. *Read Colossians 3:13.* Why do you think Paul was careful to tell us to forgive the offense here? What is the difference between forgiving the offense and forgiving the offender? How would forgiving the offense lead to forgiving the offender?
11. How have you been set free by the power of God's forgiveness?
12. How different would your life and your relationship with Christ be if you removed all bitterness from your heart by forgiving those who have hurt you?
13. What specific steps do you need to take immediately in order to forgive someone who has wronged you?

### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Because forgiveness is such a fundamental part of our relationship with Christ, the Bible has much to say about the dangers of bitterness and the delivering power of forgiveness. During your time with God this week, read the following passages and allow God's Word to deliver you from your bitterness and embrace forgiveness: Matthew 18:21-35, Mark 11:25, Job 5:2, Luke 6:28, Ephesians 4:32, Romans 12:17-21, 1 John 1:9 and Romans 8:1.

If there is someone in your life who you need to forgive, take the next steps toward forgiving that person this week. Follow the Biblical principles that Pastor Chris discussed in his message on how to forgive others by first praying for that person and then forgiving that person in the same way God forgave you.

### THE PROCESS

- Thank God for the power of His forgiveness in your life. Tell Him how it has changed you.
- Pray for those you need to forgive. Ask God to help you as you begin the process of forgiveness.
- Ask God to help you remove the stains on your heart that have been created by your bitterness.
- Tell God the things that are holding you back from forgiving others. Ask Him to help you remove these things.
- Confess your sins and ask God for His forgiveness in cleansing you of your sins.

### CHANGING YOUR MIND

*"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15*

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Have you ever been in the place where you think you have forgiven someone, but the next time you see them, talk to them or even think about them, you have to start all over again? How does that make you feel? Like a failure at forgiving? Like you never forgave in the first place? How did you respond when this happened?
2. If you have forgiven someone, how has your relationship with that person who hurt you changed once you forgave them? Do you have a hard time relating to them—even though you have honestly forgiven how they have hurt you?
3. *Read the book of Philemon.* Were you familiar with the story of Philemon and Onesimus? When you hear how Onesimus returned to his master, what does that make you think about him? Do you see him as brave? Or a doormat? As wise? Or foolish?
4. Paul encouraged Philemon and Onesimus to be reconciled to one another, to work out their issues. How would you define reconciliation? Are there relationships in your life where you think reconciliation is appropriate? When would it be appropriate to simply work out the issues with you and never contact the other person?
5. When you hear about forgiving someone, do you equate forgiving with forgetting? Does that seem like a realistic expectation, or not? Why?
6. If forgiving does not mean forgetting, what do you think forgiving does mean?
7. Forgiving is learning to retrain our minds—accepting the past for what it was, and then making the decision to move forward. For you personally, what does it look like to move forward? What does your life look like when you make the decision to not be defined by the wound done to you?
8. Forgiveness is not a one-time decision, but something we can continue to practice over and over again—sometimes even starting back at square one, when it feels like we should be much further along. No matter where you are in the process, you are somewhere. Where do you think you fall in the process of learning to forgive? What do you think is the next logical step for you to take in that process?

