

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

March 10, 2024 "Above and Beyond: Learning to Work Through Forgiving"

I Intro.

Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we offer to you. We don't want you to miss out on anything. So, make sure you stay connected to keep informed. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Recap.

We're in the second Sunday of our series on relationships; "*Above and Beyond: Elements of Healthy Relationships*". This isn't only about romantic relationships. But we're covering all the close relationships we have in our lives. Friendships, co-workers, family, neighbors, and any other relationships you may find yourself in. Relationships can be messy, because people are messy. Including us. So, this is kind of a deeper dive into some of the more obscure and difficult aspects of maintaining relationships. We believe we were created for connection. To be in relationship. With both God and each other. And since these relationships can challenge us, we want to be curious, to be students, and admit that no matter how long we've walked this earth there is always more we can learn about how to make our relationships even better. First Sunday we talked about helping walk a friend through the process of recovering from making some poor choices and the shame that comes with it. Today, we talk about the work of forgiving in relationships.

III Sunday.

We all know the importance of practicing forgiveness in maintaining healthy relationships. But we're not always sure about what the process of working through forgiveness should look like. Or some of the elements of working through forgiveness that make it more of a challenge. So, some questions.

What makes forgiving difficult for you?

What have you had to learn, and grow, to help you be more forgiving in your relationships?

A heads up about the scripture today. It's a lengthy passage based on an even lengthier amount of scripture to be able to tell the entire story. The story actually begins in the middle of Genesis 25 and we don't enter the story until the end of Genesis 32. You can just read the actual passage we use **Genesis 32:1-33:5**. To get the entire backstory you can either watch the message where the story is set up. Or you can read Genesis chapters 25-33. Go ahead and read the primary passage **Genesis 32:1-33:5**, and we'll walk through Jacob and Esau's process of working through forgiveness.

1. Make the commitment to God's presence in this work of forgiving. (Genesis 32:1-2)

In the process of forgiveness, there is the essential work of getting yourself together first. There is prep work, making sure your heart and head are right, and you will be coming from a good place. It's described here as; *"camping with God"* to be done first. Jesus reinforced this idea of pre-work before hard conversations in Matthew 7. *"Don't judge others. The way you judge (not what you judge, but the manner you judge) But if you are to speak to them, get the plank out of your eye first so you can see clearly."* Jacob had made peace with his father-in-law in chapter 31. And then in this part of the story we see Jacob continuing his work with God. There is a digging through your own inner self looking for unresolved issues, bitterness, unaddressed hurts, and more, that may be in the way of a good, healing, forward moving work of forgiveness. Get your 'you know what' together first.

2. Decide ahead of time what your first movement towards reconciling will be. (Genesis 32:3-5)

This means how you will show, both in words and tangibly, you understand the depth of how you hurt the other. Have a plan. In the corporate world; *'plan the work, and work the plan'*. For forgiveness to work, to be effective, you have to understand the depth of the hurt you caused, be able to explain it in detail, and show real remorse. And the other person needs to see and feel that.

3. Be prepared for an "I'm not quite ready" response. (Genesis 32:6-8)

Hurt...hurts. It just doesn't go away. There is this continual process of healing that requires on the other person's part the continual work of forgiving. We want to say; *"But I said I'm sorry. What else do I need to do?"* Genuine remorse, apologizing, asking for forgiveness is important. But it has to recognize and leave space for people who aren't quite ready to forgive. And this is really hard. But this understanding is at the heart of working through issues. We can't just wave our hand and the pain disappears. Grief (loss, hurt), is described as a hole, a tear, that doesn't always shrink. But you will have to grow healing and wholeness around it. You wait...and be patient.

4. It's probably going to mean you're going to have to duke it out with God. (Genesis 32:9-30)

This is the second time meeting with God is mentioned. And in this wrestling with God, it will mean coming to terms with who you are, and letting God work out who you need to be. This is the continual (we want to just get it over with) work of opening yourself up to allow God to reveal to you the things inside you need to be aware of and to work on. And it's a street knife fight.

5. Test the waters to see if the other person is open to reconciliation. (Genesis 33:1-2)

This work of forgiveness is centered in the realization there are scars and possibly even open sensitive wounds. This may seem and feel selfish and childish. But it never hurts to have someone make sure the ground is fertile for the work of forgiveness and reconciliation before you approach each other to work through it. This might be a mediator. A third party, neutral person, who could help create a space for you two to meet, to help you both navigate your feelings, and start the conversation. Often it's counseling. Be humble enough to know you just might need to ask for help.

6. Grovel. Well, you know what I mean. (Genesis 33:3-4)

The work of forgiveness towards reconciliation demands a significant, genuine, action showing you have an understanding of the depth and significance of the hurt. It's tangible genuine remorse. Sometimes people need to see a tangible, out in the open act, that shows you get it, and you're serious about working things out. Remember. This is a process not an event.

7. Begin the work of rebuilding. (Genesis 33:5)

Just getting an *"I forgive you. I accept your apology"* isn't the end of the work. Esau asking Jacob to catch him up on what he's missed is such a beautiful act. Let's fill in the places we missed. There is the slow and laborious process of rebuilding and restoring the relationship. And it's going to look different for every person and every situation. It's to reestablish trust and how the relationship will look going forward. Often it looks and feels like starting over. This will take the time it takes.

IV Challenge.

Forgiveness. So easy and cut and dry. Not so much huh? We have to realize that forgiving is a continual act because that hole of hurt never actually closes. We grow health around it. But we always feel the pain and loss of being wronged. In addition, we realize not only is forgiving a continual process, but it's also a lengthy one that contains a lot of overlapping elements. And this story shows us those elements of the process of forgiving. These can all exist at the same time which means we have to be aware of each of them as we are working through this process of forgiveness. But in the end when we repair the relationship we realize all of the hard work was more than worth it.

So, in those strained relationships you may have in your life, where could you begin to heal them in this process of forgiveness?