

Forgiveness

Over the past couple of months we have been going through all these different spiritual disciplines. It has been a journey for all of us and some self reflection on our parts and trying to figure out if we've been living these disciplines out or do we need to start applying these to our lives. Tonight we are going to go over our last one for this series. There are of course more disciplines that we could go over but we thought this would be a good one to stop at. Tonight's discipline in my opinion is probably the hardest one and one I struggle with sometimes. Before that, there's this acronym I heard and it really fits with this. It's being H.O.T or Humble, Open, and Transparent. Hot might throw some people off but the words used for it is how we should be. We are all offended at some point in our lives. And how we handle that offense leads us into our discipline for tonight. We are going to talk about forgiveness. (ask them what it means) We're not just going to talk about the word but how to forgive people as well. Earlier I talked about being offended and what it does to us. This sets us up to something profound and that is offense is the gateway to unforgiveness. When we get offended the last thing we want to do is forgive someone but instead lash out at them or even cuss at them. A lot of us get offended for various reasons, maybe a post on the gram, maybe someone said something or did something to you, maybe you saw a person you don't like or maybe someone didn't say happy birthday to us. We got to let these things go because offenses aren't leading us through the gates of forgiveness but opening the gate and being the gateway to unforgiveness. Pain hurts more when it's pointless. We are all going to go through some things. We can't let this pain be pointless and we have to flip it around and use our pain for God. We have to know how to use our pain. There are people who frustrate us, who annoy us, some have faked you out with their friendship, some want to fight you, some others have faulted you. Some have faced you and told you what you didn't want to hear and that has offended you. Not everyone is a hater, some are helpers; but depending where your heart is you can put them in the wrong category. If your heart is shut down you can be offended over the right things. We need to realize and maybe some already do, people will fail you whether it's on accident or on purpose. Everyone at some point in your life will fail you.

I'm not expecting you to come away tonight and automatically forgive someone, maybe you will, I don't know. But God wants us to understand The Gift of Forgiveness. Forgiveness is the foundation, we need to have a sure and firm foundation to things. I'm saying this because forgiveness is a primary spiritual discipline of every Christ follower. There is a blessing in being able to forgive others and knowing that it is the building block everything else makes sense. You cannot be a christian and not forgive. It is the foundation. Knowing that it's the foundation helps lead us into the right direction. Now we can learn HOW TO FORGIVE. We know we're supposed to forgive people and it's not as simple as doing this: They're out of my life now and I forgive them. There are things that are holding us back, maybe it's something recent or maybe it's something that happened a while ago. If forgiveness sounds cute but is never cultivated or kept up, it's merely a concept and not a foundation in our lives. Forgiveness takes time and work. You know the worst kind of pain is a festering pain. It's a pain that you

acknowledge and it grows into something else. We live life with a pain that was never addressed or given to God. You know no one wakes up one day as an abuser, drunk, cheater, etc; that's a pain that no one was able to put their hand on and it festered. The worst thing about it didn't start out big, but small. The thing you hate and wish you could change, started out as this small thing and it festers. You have to be intentional about forgiveness.

We're going to look at the bible Matthew 18:21-34. Peter is a gangster.

When you think you're better than someone, it's hard to forgive someone. When you have this thought process of like, im better than this person will ever be, I do things better than them, I don't stoop down to their level, im not fake like them and all of that it's hard to forgive because in your mind you're a saint compared to them. Romans 3:23 tells us otherwise. We are not better than anyone because we have all sinned and done things that are bad. We all have this level for someone who we think is beyond God's forgiveness. Like we ask how many times should I forgive this person, How many times should I forgive this cowboys fan, how many times should I forgive this racist. We should ask ourselves how many times has Christ forgiven us? God wants to teach us how to forgive and he is giving us the steps to do that. Luke 6:37 says:

Offense is either picked up or put on. Offenses are all around us. There coming and going. Offense happens all around us and goes past us. But then I'm driving to work and running late to work and someone cuts me off and I pick that offense up. I let another one go by but my gf cheated on me last night and lied to me, you're a racist and shouldn't have made that comment. The problem is now I have to go through my day and worship God with these things on me. Some of us are used to this and some offenses are put on, I found out I can't go to college like I dreamed about and my mom knew that wasn't possible and that offense has been put on me, some have been put on by those close to us like friends, family, coaches and then we become more offended, im so offended don't talk to me like that. You looking at me crazy, you best back up. The person at the gym took the machine. The offense now becomes the seat of unforgiveness. We get comfortable. This is a depiction of some of us today and wonder why we can move on or why things are tough. We carry these offenses with us cause we don't want to forget and we want to carry the scars so no one does this to us again. When you carry all this baggage, it's hard to fit through the door to christ. God can give you a simple instruction to lift your hand and you can't even manage that. God would rather you have your heart right than go out to do missions or serve with the baggage of unforgiveness, that's why forgiveness is so important. When you carry all the baggage you start to experience forgiveness fatigue, you let this one person go and then you let this other person go and you forgave them but there always seems like there's more and you decide to just carry the rest of the weight because your tired of forgiving and chose to keep the burdens on you. I'm telling you these offenses can always be laid down. Forgiveness requires faith, We can't put our fairy in the person we have to put our faith in God over the person. Forgiveness is a place that requires us to have faith in God and it is a process.

What if the best thing you did in 2021 was forgive someone. Think of the person who could walk in right now and change your whole attitude. You know them, some of yall can smell em, you know they nasty laughs. Some may be closer than you want to admit. What happens if you really forgave them for what they said or did. Why do I need to forgive them? Because unforgiveness always limits your future. Forgiveness isn't about what they deserve, it is about what God Desires. Everyone wants someone to deserve their forgiveness ; but we've never deserved anything that God has given us.

It's simple and you're going to need the Holy Spirit's help to do it, because releasing debt is hard when they do owe you. They should at least say sorry. They should at least recognize they weren't a good parent, that they weren't loyal to me, that they stabbed me in the back. God is saying you can't control any of them but you can give me all of you

As we close and Laura comes up to play, It may not be your fault, but it's your responsibility. You can't be held hostage another day waiting for someone else's freedom. They may never get it, they may never get to a place where they're emotionally aware enough to know what they did. But God is giving you a key to be able to unlock your future, releasing them, and thus releasing your future.