

UNEXPECTED

"Forgiveness"

April 24, 2016

How does real forgiveness work? (from the story of Joseph)

1. Make sure you don't just need thicker skin.

"Joseph, who was sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar." Psalm 105:18 (NLT)

2. Circumstances that make forgiving easier:

- a. Your situation improves (Gen. 41:41-43)
- b. Those that hurt you realize what they've done (Gen. 44:16)
- c. Those that hurt you apologize (Gen. 50:17)

3. Realize forgiveness takes time.

4. Refuse to get revenge.

"Joseph's brothers became fearful. 'Now Joseph will show his anger and pay us back for all the wrong we did to him,' they said... But Joseph replied, 'Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you?'" Gen. 50:15-19 (NLT)

5. Realize God can use difficult people\circumstances to build character.

"Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the Lord tested Joseph's character... Joseph was put in charge of all the king's household; he became ruler..." Ps. 105:19-21 (NLT)

6. Believe God can bring good out of evil.

"You meant to hurt me, but God turned your evil into good to save the lives of many people, which is being done." Genesis 50:20 (NCV)

Leadership Tip!

If you have potential life group leaders, co-leaders or hosts in your group... You don't have to wait for life group leadership training to be offered at Coastal. Schedule the facilitators to conduct the training at one of your group meetings.

UNEXPECTED - FORGIVENESS**STARTER QUESTIONS:**

What does forgiveness mean to you?

What is the longest you have gone before forgiving someone?

MAIN IDEA:

We are currently in a series titled "Unexpected", looking at the life of Joseph and how we can relate to his story. This week we are studying forgiveness. Forgiveness is our willingness to pardon others when we are hurt or offended.

As Christians, forgiveness is one of the largest struggles we will deal with. Most of us can relate to an event that has happened in our lives that required forgiveness. What makes forgiveness tricky is often the path is uneven. When we seek forgiveness for something we expect it to be easy; however many times we struggle if we need to forgive someone.

NOTE: Have a good discussion among your group about what forgiveness means to them.

Like Joseph, many of us have experienced terrible circumstances in our life that require forgiveness. Joseph was faced with that situation when he had an opportunity to pay his brothers back for all the pain they had caused him. In *Genesis 50*, we see how Joseph responded.

READ Genesis 50 as a group

As we read through this story, we see that Joseph sets an example for all of us to follow. After being sold into slavery by his brothers, he had a chance to enact revenge and yet he chose to forgive.

Is there a time when you had to forgive family? How hard was that?

How does the forgiveness process work in your life?

When we feel we have been wronged, the pain associated with that experience embeds a memory that makes it very difficult to take any steps toward forgiveness. Whether we are forgiving someone for the first time or after multiple times, it seems to get harder rather than easier to forgive.

Overcoming any pain and moving toward forgiveness requires us to exercise all the tools in our spiritual tool box.....

Prayer - Seeking peace, confidence and discernment from God to forgive.

Scripture - Digging into Gods word for guidance, assurance and comfort.

Encouragement – Asking our friends to pray for and with us as we navigate the process.

What is the hardest obstacle in order for you to forgive someone?

In the message, Pastor Hank describes 6 steps that will make the forgiveness process work.

NOTE: Discuss each step. Have someone read the scripture associated with each step.

1. Make sure you don't just need thicker skin. *Psalms 105:18*
2. Circumstances that make forgiving easier. *Genesis 44:16*
3. Realize forgiveness takes time. *Genesis 41:41-43*
4. Refuse to get revenge. *Genesis 50:15-19*
5. Realize God can use difficult people\circumstances to build character *Psalms 105:19-21*
6. Believe God can bring good out of evil. *Genesis 50:20*

Which of these steps would be the easiest for you? How about the hardest?

FINAL THOUGHTS:

What is one area that you are currently struggling with forgiveness?

We have discussed Joseph, but Jesus was the ultimate forgiver by giving his life to forgive our sins. His desire to forgive led to our opportunity to receive salvation and eternal life.

As Christians, forgiveness is crucial in living the Christlike life we are challenged to live.

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Colossians 3.13

When we forgive, we extend an example of what it is like to serve a loving God. Just as God extends his amazing grace to us daily, forgiving someone really should be one of the simplest things we do.

How can our group pray for you?

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” - 1 Corinthians 11:1

CLOSE IN PRAYER

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE:

Ephesians 4:2

Romans 12:9

FAMILY FOCUS

Sample a bitter food – ginger, horseradish, lemon or lime.

Discussion point: Nurturing grudges and unforgiveness destroys our relationships; God helps us forgive.

Have your children taste a bitter, non-poisonous root such as ginger. Alternatively, use some horseradish, lemon juice or lime juice. Have something sweet on hand for your children to eat to remove the bitter taste. Then read Hebrews 12:14-15.

Questions for discussion

Do you prefer a bitter or a sweet taste?

How did you make the bad taste in your mouth go away?

How can we make sure no bitter roots grow up in our family and among our friends?

Key concepts

One of Satan's favorite tools to cause discord in families and churches is the root of bitterness. It happens easily: one person does wrong to another without realizing it and then the person who feels wronged holds a grudge. Pretty soon everyone is so busy being bitter towards each other, they forget to love each other.

If we miss the grace of God, we harbor grudges and do not forgive. On the other hand, when we share the grace of God with others, we readily forgive before the other person asks our forgiveness.

Holding grudges and not forgiving puts a bad taste in our relationships like the _____ (bitter tasting food). When we forgive others, it is like the _____ (sweet treat). When you ate the _____, it helped to take the bad taste out of your mouth. Just as the sweet taste took away the bitter taste, so God can remove unforgiveness from our hearts and replace it with love.

Relevant Scripture

Hebrews 12:14-15 "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."