

Life Changing Community Group Discussion Questions

week of 9/13/26

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today grateful for Your mercy that is new every morning. As we open Your Word together, we ask that You would soften our hearts and quiet our minds. Holy Spirit, move among us in this group. Help us to set aside our defenses and our pride, and make us truly open to what You want to speak into each of our lives today. Where there is pain, bring healing. Where there is bitterness, bring freedom. And where there is hardship in forgiving, bring Your supernatural grace. We trust that You are at work in this room, and we surrender this time to You. In Jesus's name, amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one of your favorite childhood memories of someone showing you unexpected kindness or generosity?

Summary

In this sermon on forgiveness, Pastor Elise challenged the congregation to move beyond a surface-level understanding of forgiveness and wrestle with its true depth and difficulty. Drawing from Matthew 18, she unpacked Jesus's parable of the unmerciful servant to show that forgiveness is not about excusing sin or forgetting pain, but about naming the wrong, practicing accountability, and choosing mercy rooted in the character of God. She emphasized that forgiveness is not natural but supernatural, requiring the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Pastor Elise also addressed the cultural forces working against forgiveness, particularly the "attention economy" that profits from outrage and enemy-making. She called the church to be a countercultural witness by embodying radical mercy, reminding us that our ability to forgive flows from the immense mercy God has already shown us. Forgiveness, she argued, is not just a personal spiritual discipline but a kingdom witness, a tangible sign that the reign of God is breaking into the world here and now.

Key Verses

- Matthew 18:21-22
- Matthew 18:23-35
- 1 Peter 2:10
- Psalm 103:2-5
- Romans 14:10-12

Questions

1. Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone who sins against him, suggesting seven times. Why do you think Peter thought seven times was a generous number, and what does Jesus's answer of seventy-seven times reveal about the nature of forgiveness in God's kingdom?
2. The sermon described what economists call the "attention economy," where outrage and anger are used to capture and keep our attention. Have you noticed this shaping your own attitudes or emotions? How do you think it affects our ability to practice forgiveness?

3. The unmerciful servant received an enormous debt cancellation but immediately refused to extend even small mercy to another. In what ways can we fall into a similar pattern, celebrating God's grace for ourselves while withholding it from others?
4. Pastor Elise shared her personal story of forgiving someone who had deeply hurt her, and how that act of forgiveness ultimately brought her freedom rather than just benefiting the other person. Have you ever experienced forgiveness as something that freed you rather than just the other person? What was that like?
5. Desmond Tutu wrote that refusing to forgive keeps you chained to the person who hurt you, while forgiving allows you to move on. How does this perspective challenge or encourage you in a situation where forgiveness feels impossible or unfair?
6. Pastor Elise said that forgiveness is not just a personal gift we receive from God but a kingdom witness to the world around us. How does viewing forgiveness as a public, outward testimony change the way you think about your responsibility to practice it?

Life Application

This week, identify one relationship or situation where you have been holding on to bitterness, resentment, or an unwillingness to forgive. Spend time in prayer each day asking the Holy Spirit to help you take one concrete step toward forgiveness. That step might look like writing out your pain honestly before God, reaching out to someone you have been avoiding, or simply releasing your desire for personal vengeance and trusting God's justice. Remember that forgiveness is not a single moment but a process, and you do not have to walk it alone. Ask a trusted friend or your small group to pray with you and hold you accountable as you take that step toward freedom.

Key Takeaways

- Forgiveness is not natural but supernatural. It requires the active presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and it is rooted in the character of a God who is both just and merciful.
- Jesus's call to forgive seventy-seven times is a direct reversal of the world's pattern of unlimited vengeance. God's kingdom flips the script, calling His people to show unlimited mercy instead.
- The cultural "attention economy" is actively forming us toward anger, hostility, and enemy-making. The church is called to be a countercultural community that witnesses to the gospel through radical, costly mercy.
- Forgiveness is not about forgetting or excusing sin. It involves naming the wrong, pursuing accountability, and then choosing to release the debt, which brings freedom to the one who forgives as much as to the one forgiven.

- Our capacity to forgive others flows directly from our remembrance of the immense mercy God has shown us. A life growing in grace and sanctification naturally becomes a life that is quicker to extend mercy to others.

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for the mercy You have shown each one of us, a mercy we could never earn and a debt we could never repay. As we leave this time together, we ask that the truth of Your forgiveness would move from our heads into the deepest places of our hearts. Holy Spirit, give us the courage to take the steps toward forgiveness that feel too hard to take on our own. Where we are wounded, bring healing. Where we are holding on to bitterness, bring freedom. And where we are tempted to make enemies, remind us that it was while we were still enemies that Christ died for us. Form us into a people of radical mercy, so that our lives become a witness to Your kingdom breaking into this world. We trust You with the pain we carry, and we trust You with the justice that belongs to You alone. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.

A Note About These Questions: These small group questions are developed from each week's sermon with the assistance of Sermonshots, which incorporates AI technology. The resulting questions and content are reviewed and edited by the pastor before being shared with the congregation.