

Better Together

FAITH FAMILY



06/14 • Better Together—Part 1

I've heard marriage is a competition between two people to see who can forgive the other more. The competition is real, and it is with everyone you encounter! There is one secret to forgiveness that you must learn to make it work; we will discuss this next. **Read Philemon**

[This discussion sheet will prove more useful if you've listened to the corresponding message beforehand:
<https://subsplash.com/nblc/sermons/ms/+hskyyqq>.

1. What is the best thing about family?
What is the hardest thing about family?
2. In the Bible, "your house" (v. 2) is *your oikos*—Some say, "Friends are the family you choose for yourself." *Oikos* is the key relationships God chose to put in the places you live and work and play. How would your interactions with coworkers, neighbors, classmates, etc., look if you viewed them as if they were God-appointed? (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:16)
3. Fractured relationships happen (v. 18). Which one of the following has been the biggest reason for interpersonal problems among your oikos?
 - Trust issues
 - Different expectations
 - Politics
 - Personality clash
 - Money problems
 - Miscommunication
 - Differing values (or goals)
 - Lifestyle differences (or habits)
4. In Christ, God wants to move us to a gracious communion—*koinonia* (v.6). Our oikos relationships are a key way we get to effectively grow in this knowledge. Why is forgiving each other a powerful witness for Jesus Christ?
5. Paul appeals to Philemon to forgive Onesimus (vv. 10, 17). Forgiveness means to treat someone differently than they deserve *on account of someone else*.
 - How do the following verses validate this definition? Philemon 18; Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:21.
 - How does Ephesians 4:32 apply?
6. Laura Petherbridge identified five things forgiveness is NOT. Forgiveness is not ...
 - 1) ... a feeling.
 - 2) ... pretending you are not hurt.
 - 3) ... condoning what they did to you.
 - 4) ... trusting the offender(s).
 - 5) ... relieving them of responsibility.Which of these insights helps you most?
7. The name, "New Beginnings," is a practice from the Sullivan home. When one offends another, we ask for "new beginnings." Then three steps follow:
 - 1) Confess the offense. (Clarification or correction may be required).
 - 2) Forgive the offense (Say, "I forgive you," not "That's ok.")

- 3) Share a “new beginnings hug.” (If you don’t feel like hugging, hug until you feel like it!).

How do you make sure your relationships do not let offenses fester and give the devil a foothold? How do we not become tired or cynical about the need to keep forgiving each other?

8. God redeems everything (v. 15). Check out Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28. How does God’s ability to use even evil intentions and to work all things together for good help you approach difficult relationships in your *oikos* relationships with optimism? What are concrete ways your optimism—or confidence that God redeems everything—might be evident to someone who was watching you in the midst of a conflict?

Summary: We often experience fractures in our God-given relationships (our *oikos*). Insisting on our rights or using might doesn’t a lasting relationship make—but acknowledging our shared plight prepares for us a gracious communion and helps us understand the gifts of God given to us in Jesus Christ. We are all sinners saved by grace and we get to share the same grace we ourselves have received. This is a powerful witness to the world. Forgiveness is simple, but it is not easy. As we struggle to live “new beginnings” toward one another, we hold to a long term perspective, confident that our hope in God’s promises will prove true.

Prayer for Our Nation

Almighty God, please heal our land. Help us to remember Your generous provision and to constantly do Your will. Help our country to undertake the challenges we face with love and truth. Save us from violence,

discord, confusion, pride and arrogance, and from every evil course of action. Grant that we, who came from many nations with many different languages, may become a united people. Support us as we use our freedoms to serve each other, and give those we have entrusted authority of government the spirit of wisdom, that there may be justice and peace in our land. When times are prosperous, may our hearts be thankful, and in troubled times do not let our trust in You fail; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Prayer for Your Five

Lord, we were called to belong when we believed. Help each of us to identify those in our faith family You want us to bless this week through time spent together, needs met, and faith shared. Help our thoughts for these people You have blessed us with to turn into prayers on their behalf. Bless them, keep them, and make Your face to shine upon them, in Christ.

Prayer for Your Blessing List

Father, we know that You have blessed us for a purpose: we are blessed to be blessings to others. Help us to make You known to the people whom You have placed in our lives who are not yet plugged into a faith family. Help us to remain diligent in praying that they may know Your love and will for them. Help us through actions and words to show our care for them. Open their hearts to You, Lord, that they may be saved. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.