

SMALL GROUPS

Key Takeaways

1. Foundations Matter

Just as a house needs a solid foundation, our relationships need a strong spiritual foundation. We can have all the outward appearances of faith, but if our relational foundation is broken, it will eventually show.

2. God's Way vs. Our Way

"In order for relationships to work, we must let the one who designed them define them."

Our natural instincts often lead us away from forgiveness, but God's way—though harder—leads to life.

3. Love and Relationship Are Inseparable

"My relationship with God is inseparable to my relationship with the people that God has put in my life."

We cannot claim to love God while treating people badly, especially those closest to us.

4. The Forgiven Forgive

Because we have been forgiven of an unpayable debt, we are called to extend that same grace to others—even when it doesn't feel fair.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. Foundation Check: The sermon compared relational foundations to house foundations. What are some "cracks" that might appear in our relationships when the foundation isn't solid? What does a solid relational foundation look like?
2. Crossroads Moments: Pastor Jon asked, "Am I going to base my life on what I think or what God thinks?" Can you share a time when what you thought was right conflicted with what God's Word said? What did you choose?
3. The Enemy's Strategy: The sermon mentioned that the enemy destroys relationships slowly through bitterness, offense, pride, and the silent treatment. Which of these do you find most challenging in your own life?

Going Deeper

4. Difficult People: Jesus said they'll know we're His disciples by how we love one another (John 13:34-35). Why is it significant that our witness depends on loving difficult people, not just our church attendance or Christian merchandise?
5. Offense is Coming: Jesus said it's impossible that no offenses should come (Luke 17:1). If offense is inevitable, how should we prepare ourselves to respond differently than the world does?
6. Misunderstanding Forgiveness: The sermon clarified that:
 - Forgiveness isn't minimizing the offense
 - Forgiveness isn't the same as reconciliation
 - Forgiveness isn't forgetting
 - Forgiveness is instant; trust is rebuilt

7. Which of these misconceptions have you struggled with? How does this clarity change your perspective?

Personal Application

7. The Parable Challenge: In Matthew 18:21-35, the servant who was forgiven much refused to forgive little. Can you identify with this servant? Is there a "small debt" you're holding onto while having been forgiven a "massive debt" by God?
8. "I Can't Forgive": Many people say, "I know I should forgive them, but I just can't." The sermon pointed to Philippians 4:13—we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. What's the difference between willpower and surrendering to Christ when it comes to forgiveness?
9. Protecting Your Peace: The phrase "I'm protecting my peace" has become popular. How can we discern between healthy boundaries and using this phrase as an excuse to avoid forgiveness or difficult conversations?

Practical Steps from the Sermon

The sermon gave three practical steps for dealing with difficult relationships:

1. Pray for Them (Matthew 5:43-44)

- Start by simply praying, even if it feels forced at first
- Over time, prayer softens YOUR heart, not necessarily theirs
- Prayer changes you, not them

2. Bless Them (Luke 6:27-28; Romans 12:14)

- Speak well of them (don't curse them, even secretly)
- Blessing changes the atmosphere and changes you

3. Do Good to Them (Romans 12:17-21)

- Kindness is spiritual warfare

- Overcome evil with good
- Leave vengeance to God

Group Activities

Activity 1: Foundation Assessment

Have each person privately write down:

- One relationship where the foundation feels solid
- One relationship where there are "cracks"
- One practical step they can take this week to strengthen a weak foundation

Share only what you're comfortable sharing with the group.

Activity 2: Forgiveness Prayer Exercise

- Take a few minutes of silence for each person to ask God: "Is there someone I need to forgive?"
- Write down the name(s) that come to mind (keep this private)
- Pray together: "God, I surrender my hurt to You. Give me the strength to forgive as You have forgiven me."

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the three practical steps (pray, bless, or do good) and apply it to someone you're struggling to forgive:

- Pray: Set a daily reminder to pray for this person for 7 days
- Bless: Send an encouraging text or note, or speak well of them to someone else
- Do Good: Perform one act of kindness for them this week

Accountability: Share your commitment with at least one person in the group and check in with each other during the week.

Reflection Questions for the Week

Journal or meditate on these questions:

1. What debt has God forgiven in my life that I often take for granted?
2. How would my relationships change if I truly believed "the forgiven forgive"?
3. What insecurities is the enemy using to create division in my relationships?
4. Where am I confidently wrong about a relationship situation? Am I willing to hear God's perspective?
5. If people only knew me by how I love others (not my playlist, church attendance, or social media), what would they conclude about my relationship with Jesus?

Closing Prayer Points

- Pray for strength to forgive the "inexcusable" as God has forgiven us
- Pray for solid foundations in our most important relationships
- Pray for group members who are struggling with specific relationships
- Pray that our love for others would be the clearest evidence of our faith
- Pray for wisdom to know when forgiveness requires boundaries and when it opens doors to reconciliation