

Overview:

Forgiveness always sounds good—at least in theory. We are told in Colossians 3:13 to, “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” But, how do we do that? What happens when I get hurt by someone and have difficulty forgiving them? How can I practically forgive them? In this session we will learn five steps to forgiving others.

Five steps to forgiving others... we need to understand:

I. Forgiveness is something we all need.

1. We all sin.

Romans 3:23 (NIV84) “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

- Sin is “missing the mark.”

2. Sin causes SEPARATION.

a. Causes barrier with God.

Isaiah 59:2 (NIV84) “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”

b. Causes barrier with people (No relationship!).

Proverbs 15:17 (NIV84) “Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred.”

II. Forgiveness is not optional - it is a clear command.

- “*Forgiven people should forgive people.*”

1. We must forgive like Jesus did.

Colossians 3:13 (NIV84) “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

2. We must follow his example!

Luke 23:34 (NIV84) “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

III. Forgiveness uproots bitterness and allows for grace.

1. Not forgiving others will destroy you.

Proverbs 19:3 (NIV84) “A man’s own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the LORD.”

2. Bitterness enslaves us!

Hebrews 12:15 (NIV84) “See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV84) “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

- “*You will either get better or get bitter.”*

IV. Forgiveness keeps us from vengeance.

- Vengeance is “To inflict injury in return for an insult.”

1. God alone is Judge (and He has not granted us the power of attorney!)

Romans 12:17, 19 (NIV84) “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody... 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.”

2. God will set things right!

Psalms 98:7-9 (NIV84) “Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.”

V. Forgiveness is a choice you must make. How?

1. Forgiveness is an act of your will.

- Example of Corrie Ten Boom

2. Seven “magic” words:

- “I was wrong, will you forgive me?”

3. Four “restorative” words:

- “Yes, I forgive you.”

Conclusion:

Forgiveness is an important part of any Christian’s life. Understanding that we all need forgiveness, and that forgiving others is not optional, should motivate us to imitate our Lord and his directives. Further understanding that not forgiving others leads to bitterness and vengeance should cause us to take the necessary steps to forgive as the Lord forgave us.

Supporting Material:

Important Verses:

Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave."

Romans 14:4 "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand."

Colossians 3:13 "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

2 Corinthians 2:7 "Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow."

Matthew 6:12 "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Luke 17:3,4 "So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

Matthew 6:14,15 "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Matt 18:21,22 "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy seven times.'

Luke 23:34a Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Romans 12:17-21 "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

1 Pet 4:8 "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins."

Leviticus 19:17 "Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt."

Proverbs 10:12 "Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs."

Proverbs 17:9 "He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends."

Proverbs 12:16 "A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult."

Proverbs 19:11 "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense."

Mark 11:25 "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Luke 6:37b Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

Matthew 18:21-35
The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' 22 Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. 23 Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. 26 The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. 28 But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. 29 He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. 30 His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' 31 But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 32 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. 33 Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 34 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 35 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. 36 This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Quotes:

"We all agree that forgiveness is a beautiful idea until we have to practice it."
- C.S. Lewis

"You must choose to forgive whoever has wronged you. Forgiveness is not an emotion, it is a decision of the will."
- Erwin W. Lutzer

"Forgiveness is not that stripe which says, 'I will forgive, but not forget.' It is not to bury the hatchet with the handle sticking out of the ground, so you can grasp it the minute you want it."
- Dwight L. Moody

"Oh how terrible our sins look when they are committed by someone else."
- Charles Swindoll

"Forgiveness is a required course."
- Charles Swindoll

"When God pardons, he consigns to everlasting forgetfulness."
- Merv Rosell

"The will can function, regardless of the temperature of one's heart."
- Corrie Ten Boom (Nazi Concentration Camp survivor)

"I can forgive but I cannot forget is only another way of saying, 'I will not forgive.'
- Henry W. Beecher

"Good to forgive. Best to forget."
- Robert Browning

"Forgiveness is man's deepest need and highest achievement."
- Horace Bushnell

"We pardon to the degree that we love."
- Francois, Duc de La Rochefoucauld

"Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a permanent attitude."
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

"If God forgives us, we must forgive ourselves. Otherwise it is almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than him."
- C.S. Lewis

Resources:

TRC Messages: TRC *Essentials of Forgiveness* series, by Bill Young, 2015 (see: http://www.experiencetherock.com/messages/recent-messages/?enmse=1&enmse_sid=21)

Book: C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1956.

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever seen the destructive power of UNforgiveness in someone's life? In your life? Explain how this came about and the negative effects you witnessed.
2. Have you ever had someone forgive a great debt or some sin you have committed against them. How did that make you feel?
3. For you, what is the hardest part of forgiving someone who has greatly sinned against you? Why is it so difficult and why should you forgive them anyway?
4. What are the "seven magic words" of forgiveness? What are the "four restorative words" of forgiveness? Practice saying them to each other now. Really, do it! :-)

DISCIPLESHIP – PART 5

Difficult Discipleship

Overview:

Discipleship is simple, yet it can be extremely difficult. If you have ever opened up your life to others, then you've no doubt experienced the trials and discouragement that come with it. Within discipleship there will often be difficulties, because discipleship involves people. As disciple makers, we need to be aware of the reasons we may want to avoid it. We also need to remind ourselves of the good work God has called us to.

Discipleship: *“helping others follow Jesus by doing deliberate spiritual good in their lives.”*

I. Bad Reasons to Not Make Disciples

1. ***“They are not my style.”***

- Their personality, behavior, interests may be different than mine.

Rom. 12:5, 1 Cor. 12:27, Eph. 5:30

2. ***“I am not qualified.”***

- *“I don't want to come off as an expert.”, or “What if I can't answer their question?”*

Ex.3:11-12, Matt. 28:20 2 Cor. 9:8

3. ***“I don't have the time.”***

Romans 12:10-13, Heb. 10:25

4. ***“They are too difficult.”***

(Ex. Attitude, problems, pride)

Matt 7:3-4, Romans 14:13

Combat the life of ***NON-DISCIPLESHIP!***

II. Fuel for Difficult Discipleship

1. **Remember, they are a person.**

- Imago Dei: “image of God”.
- Apply the Fruits of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22-23)

2. **Pray and Listen.**

- *Be quick to hear, slow to speak* (James 1:19)

3. **Get help from others.**

- Lean in on the Church, get insight from other believers
- Ephesians 4:12, 1 Pet. 4:10

4. **Remember, you were difficult, too.**

- Extend the grace and patience Jesus and other Believers have extended toward you.

Gal. 6:9, Eph. 4:2, Col. 3:12-13

DISCIPLESHIP – PART 5

Difficult Discipleship

Supporting Material:

Verses:

Exodus 3:11-12 “But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” 12 He said, “But I will be with you,”

Matthew 7:3 “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”

Matthew 28:20 “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Romans 12:5-6 “Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,”

Romans 12:10,13,16 “Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.”

Romans 14:13 “Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.”

1 Corinthians 12:27 “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

2 Corinthians 9:8 “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all

things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

Galatians 6:2,9, 10 “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Ephesians 4:1-2, 12 “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,”

Ephesians 5:30 “because we are members of his body.”

Colossians 3:12-13 “Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”

Hebrews 10:25 “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

James 1:19 “be quick to hear, slow to speak,”

1 Peter 4:10 “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another,”

Quotes:

“All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them.”

— **Hudson Taylor**

“The first service one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love of God begins in listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. It is God's love for us that He not only gives us His Word but lends us His ear. So it is His work that we do for our brother when we learn to listen to him.”

— **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

“Difficult people are exactly the people we need to intentionally move toward”

— **Stacy Reaach**

Discussion Questions:

1. From the list of “*Bad reasons to not make disciples*”, which one do you find yourself using the most? Explain your reasoning.
2. Are there any practical steps you can take to be better equipped to love difficult people?
3. Can you think of a time when you were the ‘*difficult person*’ for another Believer? Share that experience.

Notes:

Small Group Formats

Overview:

Small Groups are the heartbeat of our church. They are a place where we can grow in fellowship, our knowledge of the Bible and ultimately our relationship with Jesus. Each Small Group is unique. With some planning, you can structure the time for each meeting. This will not only help with expectations, but will set a standard of excellence by making the best use of time. Planning is a much-needed Skill to effectively lead Small Groups.

Outline:

1. Create an Experience

This is how you want your group to learn and interact during your meeting times. This will vary greatly from group to group. You just need to decide what is going to be the best experience for your group.

a. Define the components

Brainstorm a list, write out your ideas; there are no bad ones at this point. This is an idea list, not a complete list. A help to get going.

- i. Bible Study
- ii. Video Series
- iii. Prayer
- iv. Men's/Women's Nights Out
- v. Worship
- vi. Service Projects
- vii. Fun Nights
- viii. Snack Time
- ix. Fellowship Time
- x. Communion
- xi. Outreach
- xii. Shared Meals
- xiii. Sharing Time
- xiv. Discussion

b. Make it Inviting

The key here is to make it an experience that the group you are leading will feel part of. It goes without saying that building a Small Group people don't want to be part of is counterproductive.

2. Build the Format

- a. Begin with the Start and End date in mind
- b. Create a Schedule:
 - i. Week 1: Introduction
 1. Fellowship & Treats (10 min)
 2. Ice Breakers (35 min)
 3. Bible Study (30 min)
 4. Sharing time / prayer requests (15 min)
 5. Announcements (5 min)
 - ii. Week 2-5, 7-11: Bible Study
 1. Fellowship & Treats (20 min)
 2. Worship & Prayer (15 min)
 3. Sharing time / prayer requests (15 min)
 4. Bible Study (35 min)
 5. Announcements (5 min)
 - iii. Week 6: Game Night (outreach to friends)
 1. Fellowship & Treats (20 min)
 2. Prayer (5 min)
 3. Games (60 min)
 4. Announcements (5 min)
 - iv. Week 12: Party (Last Meeting)
 1. Fellowship & Meal (70 min)
 2. Sharing time or prayer requests (15 min)
 3. Recap our Time (5 min)
- c. Additional Planning
 - i. Get babysitters
 - ii. Host at different locations

- iii. Reserve a room at the church

3. Gather Materials

- a. Media:
 - i. If you are doing a video series, have a space where everyone can see and hear the TV.
 - ii. If you are doing worship, have song sheets for people who might not know the songs.
- b. Bible Study:
 - i. Do you have extra copies in case someone shows up who is not on the list?
 - ii. Extra Bibles on hand if someone needs one?
- c. Hosting Space:
 - i. Is the hosting space large enough for the number of people?
 - ii. Will you need serving plates/trays/plastic ware?
 - iii. Is it clean and organized so people can move around the space?
- d. Communication
 - i. Send out emails with the schedule
 - ii. Get a list of birthdays
- e. Assigning Tasks:
 - i. If you are doing worship, who is leading?
 - ii. If you are doing communion, who is leading?
 - iii. Assign treat schedules

4. Lead with Excellence

- a. Make sure, as a leader, you are setting the pace
- b. Share Vision for the Group.
- c. What are you hoping for people to get out of it?
- d. Pray for each of the meeting times prior to meeting. If you have an apprentice, pray with them as well.

Conclusion

Small Groups are more than a Bible Study, a hang out or a place to meet new people. They are one of the primary tools in which The Rock is able to build, disciple and communicate who Jesus Christ is — through the relationships that are built in these groups. Taking these meeting times seriously as leaders and put the effort into creating experiences that will affect people's lives for Jesus. There will be lasting fruit for years to come.

Discussion Question:

1. What is one area where you feel you can create a better experience for your Small Group? Either as a leader or an attendee?

Supporting Material:

Verses:

Luke 14:28 ESV

"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?"

Matthew 18:20

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

Acts 2:42-47

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe[d] came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

John 13:34-35

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Matt. 28: 19-20

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Proverbs 16:3 (ESV)

"Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established."

Quotes:

"If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!"

— Benjamin Franklin

"Be united with other Christians. A wall with loose bricks is not good. The bricks must be cemented together."

— Corrie Ten Boom

"Leadership: The art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."

— Dwight D. Eisenhower

Resources:

Right Now Media

www.rightnowmedia.org
Bible & Video Studies for Small Groups Great selection of studies from leaders like Craig Groeschel, Francis Chan & more.

Lifeway.com

Many good resources for Small Group

Resources at GroupLeaders.org:

These are small group resources from North Point ministries (Andy Stanley).

Small Group Studies from Saddleback:

Rick Warren's Saddleback (pastors.com) is a great example of what happens when churches are fueled by good small groups.

smallgroups.com

Many great Bible study resources.
Motto: "Everything you need know to for small groups."

BluefishTV.com Small Group Studies:

Bluefish TV also specializes in video-based ministry resources and has a library of DVD-driven curriculum.