



The Swamp of Unforgiveness

Matthew 6:14-15 | 1 John 1:9 | Luke 17:3-4

Hosts - This sermon series has been a meaningful one to many in our congregation. Beginning to biblically examine guilt, pain and failure has struck a chord and has begun to lead to anguish, healing and transformation in their lives. Thank you as hosts for being a part of that process in the discipleship journey in their lives. There is much information here. Maybe too much to cover in one night. Be careful to discern the needs of your group and cover this issue of forgiveness from a biblical perspective. There is less **Say, Ask** in this week's discussion to give you more freedom in where to camp out for your particular group.

IMPORTANT: You likely won't get through all of this. Ask for God to give you careful discernment in preparation and as you lead. You are being prayed for as you prepare and lead this week.

Say, this week Michael opened with some statements. Let's review a few of those and briefly comment on some that might be true of you.

- I find it difficult when I apologize and they refuse to accept the apology.
- At times I feel so offended that the offense seems to never fade.
- Do I even deserve forgiveness?

Say, Failing to take hold of forgiveness causes us to fail to take hold of Christ and His promises in our lives.

Ask, Has anyone ever tried to settle the score - pay back Evil for Evil, make things right in your own eyes? (rhetorical)

Say, Forgiving others is not easy, nor is it normal. Our own sense of justice can easily blind us from allowing God to work His plan of justice in our lives.

Ask, How does our sense of justice differ from God's when we scream, Give me justice!

Read this Jerry Bridges quote - *Forgiving costs us our sense of justice. We all have this innate sense deep within our souls, but it has been perverted by our selfish sinful natures. We want to see "justice" done, but the justice we envision satisfies our own interests. We must realize that justice has been done. God is the only rightful administrator of justice in all of creation, and His justice has been satisfied. In order to forgive our brother, we must be satisfied with God's justice and forego the satisfaction of our own.* The Practice of Godliness

Say, When we harbor any of these - resentment, bitterness, anger, depression, revenge – it points out that we are stuck in the swamp of unforgiveness.

Ask, how do these three statements strike you?

- Unforgiveness destroys the ability to love.
- Alligators and unforgiveness are horrible pets.
- Unforgiveness makes the pain more important than anything else.

Ask, How does God answer this statement that we can falsely believe about God and about what He can do through us?

"God can never forgive me for what I did."

Say, Believing that we are more sinful than God's forgiveness is never how God views our sin.

Say, In these two passages, the apostle Paul points out a biblical view of sin –

Read 1 Corinthians 15:9 – For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Read 1 Timothy 1:15-16 - The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

Convey this thought - The more realize the grace of God the more we realize the horror of sin and how much you have been forgiven.

Read this quote from Max Lucado - A happy saint is one who is at the same time aware of the severity of sin and the immensity of grace. Sin is not diminished, nor is God's ability to forgive it. – Max Lucado

Summarize

- No sin can separate you from the love of God - Romans 8:38-39
- confession leads to repentance to thankfulness
- Your sin no matter how ugly is not too ugly for the blood of Christ
- Stop defining yourself by your relapses and allow God's definition to become true in your life.

The second point is “I can't forgive myself for what I did.”

Stop playing God - you cannot improve His plan. It's already DONE

God uses broken, sinful lives for His glory. It is his specialty

Matthew 18:21-35 the unforgiving, forgiven worker

How many times do I condemn others and don't acknowledge my own sin?

Remember that we have been rescued

Colossians 3:13 NLT

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Because forgiveness is God's character it is available to be in our character

Living out this verse diffuses our need to continue to bring up the same offenses over and over again.

Forgive and forget is biblical

Not forgetting the event but forgetting the offense

Matthew 18 (forgive 70x7) – we are instructed to forgive much more than is above and beyond.

DL Moody - bury the hatchet with the handle sticking out of the ground

The If, then statements of forgiveness in scripture

“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Matthew 6:14-15 ESV

1 John 1:9 ESV

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Luke 17:3-4 ESV

Pay attention to yourselves! if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, “I repent”, “you must forgive him.””

Luke 17:4 ESV

Convey this truth - When God becomes more important and powerful in your life than the sin committed by you or against you, then forgiveness is realized in your life.

As believers we are the most forgiven people, so we should be the most forgiving.

Be careful about trusting your own feelings. Feelings can flat out lie. Your heart can deceive you.

If you are easily offended, you are habitually in danger of being stuck in the muck and mire of unforgiveness.

Because of what Christ accomplished on the cross, we are empowered through His spirit to extend forgiveness and grace - Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Hosts - This is a powerful topic that all of us experience in varying levels in our lives. Allow time for the group to share and always affirm your desire to pray for them and to help them to become more and more like Christ. Be careful as you lead to not allow the offenses to be the main topic of discussion, but to point group members to take that next step in forgiveness.