

Keys to Experiencing the Healing Power of Forgiveness

Week 5: Beginning Again – Restoring Trust & Healing Brokenness

Bible Basis: Philippians 2:13, “*It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*” and Matthew 18:15-22.

Basic Premise Beginning again is a work of God accomplished through God within us. The restoration of trust and healing of brokenness cannot be achieved in our strength alone nor guaranteed by our desire and efforts. The ultimate goal of forgiveness is to bring glory and honor to God.

Steps to beginning again

1. **Make a decision that you desire reconciliation and offer that decision back to God.** How many of us have a desire or move on a decision before checking in with God? First find God’s peace (Phil. 4:6-7).
2. **Rehearse the various scenarios and possible outcomes.** What happens if the offender denies or continues an offense? What impact upon me is the possibility that behavior modification may not occur?
3. **Establish clear, measurable and realistic boundaries and stick by them.** (Genesis, chapters 43-45) Boundaries protect both parties. Boundaries give control over who can enter your life and under what conditions they may do so. In establishing clear, measurable and realistic boundaries, you may permit entrance to someone who once hurt you, but he/she must leave his/her weapons behind.
4. **Cultivate and use good listening skills.** Practice (1) suspending assumptions; (2) using “I” statements; (3) don’t judge – listening is not about right or wrong, good or bad, true or false; (4) treat each person/voice equally; (5) listen for understanding; (6) ask questions to gain clarity; and (7) be silent.
5. **Consider your share of the blame by taking responsibility for your actions, reactions or inaction.** Sometimes we have to admit that we are the one stinking up a situation.
6. **Get ready for the long haul! Learn to laugh. Reconciliation takes energy, commitment and time.** See Romans 12:17-21 & Luke 6:27-28 for other ingredients that build trust and mend brokenness.

What if my brother/sister keeps sinning against me? (Matthew 18:15-17)

While forgiveness remains possible, reconciliation (the act of bringing back to a former state of harmony) may not be possible. We often need to figure out what is truth – our hope for a future relationship or the possibility that the better future does not have the offended and offender together. Sometimes, we have to follow the model Jesus gives in Matthew 18:15-17.

- ◆ Use your listening techniques to inform the offender of the injuries inflicted. Do not mask or avoid sharing your pain and loss by hiding behind “you, you, you”.
- ◆ If the offender cannot hear you, bring in a hopefully objective intermediary.
- ◆ If that fails, tell it to the church. If the offender fails to listen to the church, stay away from him or her but always, always pray for the one you have had to ostracize. **There is no skipping a step!**

Action Question

Ask God where God would want you to start in applying Luke 6:27-28 and Romans 12:20-21. Who is the “enemy” you need to bless? Is the enemy God or the church? What are some appropriate ways you can meet the offender’s needs, invest in the offender’s life, extend the grace of God to the offender?

For Next Week

The rapidly approaching Holy Week is a week of finishing old things so that new things born of resurrection may begin. What old things in our lives are we now ready to lay to rest? Prepare by considering all your relationship categories. Get clear about your boundaries – what you will and will not tolerate, what you can and cannot accept, what needs to happen to prevent disruptions in God’s plans for your life.

Study Resources: *Choosing Forgiveness* by Nancy Leigh DeMoss, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL, 2006; *The Sacred Art of Forgiveness*, Marsha Ford, Skylight Paths Publishing, Woodstock, VT, 2006; *The Gift of Forgiveness*, in “The Treasured Works of Charles Stanley”, Inspirational Press, NY, NY, 1991

Scripture and Story Highlights for Session 5: Rebuilding Trust and Mending Brokenness

Luke 6:27-36

27 "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.

30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.

31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them.

33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that.

34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full.

35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Romans 12:9-21

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

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.

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.