
Growth Group Notes: Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us



Warm Up!

If possible, show your group this short clip from the film version of Les Miserables.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wF3FX43F-7Y>

To set the scene for those who do not know the story, explain that the film begins in France in 1815 and centres around the man Jean Valjean, who has recently been released from prison, where he has served a long and harsh sentence for stealing bread to feed his family. Valjean is offered shelter and food from the Bishop of Digne, and this scene comes from later on that evening.

- Do you think what the Bishop did was reasonable? Why / why not?
- How do you think such forgiveness and grace might impact someone?
- If you can recall some person / incident where forgiveness has not been offered – how has that affected the people involved?
- What do you think the long term effects of un-forgiveness are? On the guilty person? the wronged person?
- Have you seen this in action?

Read Matthew 6:9-15

⁹ *'This, then, is how you should pray:*

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

In Matthew's account of the Lord's prayer, Jesus expands on v12, giving and receiving forgiveness, in v14-15.

- How does Jesus say offering forgiveness to others and receiving forgiveness from God are linked?

If we are in any doubt as to the close link of these two things, and the necessity for forgiving others, Jesus tells the parable of the unmerciful servant.

Read Matthew 18:21-35

- What is the context in which Jesus tells this story?
- Do you feel the king was fair with his servants?
- Who does the king in the parable equate to?
- Which character in the story are we to think of ourselves as?
- What is Jesus' application for Peter? And us now?

Putting it into practice....Reflect together on some of these

When do you find forgiving others easy?

When do you find forgiving others hard?

What is the difference between apologising and repenting?

How do we respond in situations where the guilty person is unrepentant? (check out Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18:15-17)

How would you encourage a Christian friend to respond...

- in a situation of minor offense?

- in a situation where they have legitimately wronged? (betrayal, injustice etc)

- in a situation of extreme injustice (abuse, murder etc)

Do you think there is ever a situation when a Christian should not forgive? How is Jesus' own experience instructive for us? (Luke 23:32-34)

Our world needs to learn the power of forgiveness, and Christians are uniquely placed to bring this.

What is God calling you to do as a result of this session?

Is there someone you need to forgive?

Is there a situation God might want to use you to bring healing?

The Spanish have a story about a father and son who had become estranged. The son left home and the father set out to find him. He searched for many months with no success. Finally, in desperation, the father took out a newspaper ad that read, "Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father." On Saturday, 800 men named Paco showed up looking for forgiveness and love from their father.

"In the shadow of my hurt, forgiveness feels like a decision to reward my enemy. But in the shadow of the cross, forgiveness is merely a gift from one undeserving soul to another."

Andy Stanley, It Came from Within! The Shocking Truth of What Lurks in the Heart

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Romans 12:18