



The Way Forward Series Guide

Nov. 01: Through Forgiveness

Welcome for the group and Check-in

"I am feeling..."

Psalm 23 Rhythm

- Slowly read as a group twice.
- Make observations about your experience of the meditative reading of Psalm 23
- What part resonates or creates an allergic reaction within you as we read the Psalm today?

Group Prayer:

"Good Shepherd, thank you for pursuing us, providing for us, and protecting us. Continue to refine our thoughts of you and your ways. We open our lives to receive your goodness and mercy and correction. Remind us of your love as we engage in reflection and see both virtue and vice, healing and brokenness, love and apathy. Amen."

Group Discussion about The Way Forward: Through Forgiveness

Overview of ideas the sermon explores:

1. Forgiveness is does **NOT** mean: forgetting, immediate restoration of a broken relationship, that people aren't held accountable for their wrong behavior, minimizing your pain, that there cannot be righteous anger for the hurt.
2. Forgiveness means cancel a debt against another person.
3. Make 3 promises: 1) I'm going to avoid holding the offense over your head; 2) I'm not going to tell anyone else about the offense; I'm not going to dwell on it in self-pity.
4. Why Forgive: 1) Evidence that we've genuinely asked God for forgiveness of *our* sins is that we forgive *others*; 2) Resentment will make us *miserable*; 3) We will need more forgiveness in the future.
5. Forgive as God forgave: instantly, completely, repeatedly, and freely.

Reading of passages from the sermon:

Colossians 3:12-14; Matthew 6:12; 14-15; Ephesians 4:32, 1 John 1:9

Group Discussion:

It's seems easier to avoid conflict, to minimize pain, to bury offenses. For years we may have practiced conflict avoidance and therefore avoided practicing forgiveness. Let's test your **Forgiveness Quotient**. Read the following questions, find the one with the *strongest emotional reaction*.

- 1) Do you find your mind rehearsing past hurts, reliving the wounds, over and over again?
- 2) Do you secretly hope for the failure of those who hurt you?
- 3) Are you delighted when those who hurt you get what's coming to them?
- 4) Do you find yourself saying, "*Well, I don't have anything against her, but if I never see her again, I won't be sorry!*"
- 5) Are there extreme emotions that arise when these memories are brought up?
- 6) Do you find yourself exaggerating the extent of the offense so that the person is a monster?

1. Which question surfaced the most emotion? Does it indicate you have not forgiven?
2. Describe for the group the conflict/damaged relationship that these questions surfaced. Please tell the story without using that individuals name.
3. Regarding that story please describe the emotional pain associated with it?
 - a. Is retelling the story still difficult? Why?
 - b. Did you have a time of humble confession and offering forgiveness? Was it genuine?
4. Pastor Dave taught that resentment, or holding an offense, will make us miserable. Do you have a recent example related to Union Center where you forgave someone, letting go of the resentment – please describe it (without mentioned the others name).
5. God forgives instantly, completely, repeatedly and freely. Which one do you find most challenging?

Practice for this week:

Hebrew 12:15 says, "Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many." You have the opportunity to share God's grace with another individual, and remove a potential root of bitterness in your own soul.

Identify one person that you are holding in contempt, or hurt you, or offended you. Make a way to forgive them **this week**. Go to them with a heart intent on forgiving: a letter, a call, a meeting and speak to them honestly about the offense, listen for their response, offer forgiveness sincerely, completely and freely.

Closing Prayer: