



HOW TO FORGIVE?

Bible Study by Mr G Reginald, Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu



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About the Author:

Born in 1926, G Reginald was raised in a God-fearing family in the village of Kailasapuram, near Tuticorin. During his years working in Calcutta and raising his family, he developed a deep and abiding concern for young people and a strong desire to help them grow in their faith. Around the age of 37, he began conducting Bible studies for the youth of his church in Calcutta. He went on to lead evening Bible studies for several church groups and organized and led youth camps for both his church and the Diocese of Calcutta.

Following his retirement from Bata India and his move to Tuticorin, he devoted much of his time to preparing and conducting Bible studies for churches and lay groups, including the teachers at St. Patrick's Church School. During Lent, he conducted special Bible studies in several churches throughout Tuticorin. He also regularly preached in both his Tamil and English churches, on Sundays and on special occasions such as Good Friday.

G Reginald approached every Bible study and sermon with great care. He undertook extensive research, spending hours in libraries poring over books and drawing on his own substantial collection of theological and biblical resources. His teaching reflected not only his love for Scripture but also his desire to understand it deeply and communicate its message clearly.

He had a tremendous sense of humour and invariably included a joke and a quiz in his Bible studies. His curiosity and eagerness to learn remained with him throughout his long life. At 60, he learnt to ride a scooter; at 70, to use a computer; at 80, to use a mobile phone; at 85, to type in Tamil; and at 90, to use a smartphone. His willingness to embrace new things was a remarkable expression of the same spirit that characterized his study of Scripture: he was never too old to learn.

G Reginald passed away in 2020 at the age of 94. His life was marked by a love of God's Word, a commitment to lifelong learning and a desire to share his faith with others, especially the younger generation.

These Bible studies are the fruit of many years spent reading, studying, researching, teaching and reflecting on God's Word. Above all, they reflect his hope that others would come to know, understand and live out the message of the Bible.

Note:

The content prayerfully written by Late Mr G Reginald was taken from a printed copy that he had maintained. No changes were made to the original content. It was digitized using scanread.ai and proofread manually. The summary images were generated by ChatGPT.

Introduction

There is a crying, urgent need for people in general, and more specifically in the Church, to learn to become more forgiving in their relations with one another. Further, baptized believers are becoming holy by learning to live together as forgiven and forgiving people in mission to the world.

Now, what is this thing called “Forgiving”? It’s possible to choose from a number of different sources, a definition for the often-used word “forgiveness.” For a Christian, the Bible expresses the concept most profoundly in the Gospels. And many of us have also been taught the importance of forgiving without being instructed in how to forgive. It’s the application of forgiveness rather than the understanding of it, is the most difficult problem. We need to learn how to seek, grant and accept forgiveness. Living in forgiveness is one of God’s secrets to happiness.

This study guide intends to be helpful from a very practical platform. Some of the suggestions may seem to be perplexing; but energetic application will demonstrate and prove their worth.

How to use this study guide?

Group Study: The group approach offers an unlimited and uncommon potential for interaction with each other and with the Scriptures. The groups must meet regularly, preferably once a week. Each session need take no more than 60 to 75 minutes.

Worksheet: The worksheets are personal. Questions expose us to exhortations and challenges of God’s Word. They are designed to allow the Scriptures to renew our minds so that we can be transformed by the Spirit of God. This is the ultimate goal of all Bible Study.

Self-study: Those who cannot be in a group can still do the Worksheet and go through the notes and draw their own conclusions.

Leadership: Anyone may guide these discussions. The leader is not a teacher, but a facilitator to get the group started and keep it on track.

Commitment: The group members must be committed to regular attendance, giving the meetings priority. The aim of the small group is to support one another in the process of learning and application. They must come to the study prepared, for careful preparation will greatly enrich the time spent in group discussion.

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Worksheet 1 (What is Forgiving?)

1 GROUP BUILDING

In a conflicting situation, resulting in strained or embittered relationship, my biggest problem is to:

- ☐ focus on the problem and not the person
- ☐ keep my cool
- ☐ keep things in God's perspective
- ☐ control my tongue
- ☐ admit when I've been wrong
- ☐ say what needs to be said
- ☐ listen and understand the other person
- ☐ forgive

2 LISTING AND RANKING

A: Why I don't seek or ask for forgiveness is, because

- ☐ it is painful and humiliating
- ☐ the other person may not reciprocate my proposal
- ☐ I fear that it may lead to further conflict
- ☐ it may be misunderstood as my weakness or guilt
- ☐ it is not my fault; the other person is to be blamed
- ☐ I do not know how to ask; I feel awkward

B: Why I don't forgive the person who hurt me is, because:

- ☐ the hurt is too intense and recent to overlook
- ☐ it is risky as the person may hurt me again
- ☐ the other person did not ask or want my forgiveness
- ☐ his apology is insincere and he doesn't deserve my pardon
- ☐ I feel forgiveness is illogical, impractical and foolish
- ☐ I struggle with mixed feelings - to forgive or not

3 LIFE APPLICATION

a) When do you feel closer to God?

b) Should Christian experience Rom 7:5, "I find myself doing the very thing I hate"?

c) Is it possible that you're not on speaking terms with another Christian? What are you gaining by offending them? Go to that person with a smile; forget your hurt feelings and do your part to be friends again.

Chapter 1: What is forgiving?

AIMS OF THE SESSION (OPENING)

- To relate the subject of forgiveness to our own lives
- To examine why we don't seek forgiveness
- To determine the genuine obstacles to offering forgiveness to others
- To become aware of the third dimension in our interpersonal relationships
- To be able to distinguish true forgiveness from false forgiveness
- To get acquainted with various terms associated with forgiveness

Conflicting situations (Group Building) (Worksheet item 1)

To identify the personal problems in conflicting situations:

- Anyone in the group may suggest other troubles or difficulties in such situations, to be added to the list.
- Individual response is to be shared with other members in the group.
- Ask for specific examples to illustrate the idea of forgiveness.

Illustrations: Some of the examples as given by children are:

- When you step on your dog's foot, and he licks your hand.
- When you drop mom's bowl of eggs all over the kitchen and she says "accidents do happen."
- When you lose your Dad's knife and he says, "it was rusty anyway."
- It is the fragrance the flower sheds on the heel that has crushed it.

Why don't we seek forgiveness? (Worksheet Item 2 A)

1. Pain and Humiliation: Real forgiveness is always painful, for it involves a "little death". That is definitely not pleasant and easy to endure. Asking forgiveness is humiliating. Lk 15:19 The Prodigal son could finally say that he could be no longer a son but rather a slave. Are we willing to pay this price?

Gen 44:32-34 Think about the following sentence in relation to the crucifixion of Christ. "Broken relationships are painful and are only restored through the experience of suffering."

In what way is Judah's willingness to take the place of Benjamin similar to Jesus' willingness to die in our place?

2. Not reciprocated: There is a fear that the other person may withhold and not reciprocate. Remember that forgiveness takes time and that not everyone works on our timetable or readiness. So long as we are not obstructing the forgiveness process, we are doing all that we can. Our gesture must say that we are ready to make peace.

Gen 32:7,11, Chapter 33 In twenty years Esau had become a gracious man, quick to forgive; but Jacob didn't know it. Meeting Esau can have disastrous results; hence the tension. Here is the wisdom of Jacob's strategy as in Prov. 18:16, 19:6, 21:14

3. Further conflict: Forgiving doesn't mean putting ourselves in danger. But certain situations demand our efforts at forgiveness because the relationships represent a significant investment in our lives.

4. Looks like weakness: We may look weak, with no spine or backbone. But there is no particular strength in being in bondage to someone else's evil deeds by counting on our bitter reactions to them. To break that cycle of fear, pride, prejudice and violence by forgiving is a strength and a victory. In the long run, the forgiver wins.

5. Whose blame? Did you see it from the other person's point of view. This is the beginning point for working our forgiveness in life. Sometimes, the other person hurts us in retaliation for what we have done. We need to ascertain whether it is the case and if we are at fault, we must begin to straighten it out as well as we can and as soon as we can.

Consider: Is it important to decide who was at fault? Why or why not? The main lesson we can learn from Jacob's family is that assessing blame and pinpointing the reason for breakup is not as important as a willingness to enter into the forgiveness process.

6. Ignorance and awkwardness: Yes, it doesn't come naturally. There is nothing instinctive, such as ducking when a ball is heading towards us. It has to be learned. We all know, we need to forgive; but we don't know how to do it. It is hard work.

Why do we refuse to forgive? (Worksheet Item 2 B)

1. Too recent and intense: The emotional hurt may be so recent and intense that it is difficult to think logically and take action necessary for forgiveness. Yes. It takes time; it is like healing a physical wound. Not all at once - the blood clots - skin cells grow under protective scab - finally the scab falls off. Same way,

emotional wounds also heal in stages. Do not put time demand on forgiveness; it cannot be rushed. Only then healing can begin.

Lk 15:20 - the father of the prodigal son teaches us to have patience and trust, not to expect an immediate reconciliation and to know to wait and to welcome.

2. Risky: There is no guarantee that he will not do it again; he may repeat the wrong. Trust and risk go hand in hand. Forgiving may not change the other person. We may be hurt again. But can we take it and still forgive him again? We can try.

Luke 15:18-20 From a certain point of view, this father is a failure; he is never at peace with his sons. When one returns, the other 'escapes.' But in his heart, he accepts and waits for both of them. And he reminds us that a total reconciliation is a finishing point, an ideal that is never completely attainable. It is more important for what it creates in our heart than for its exterior and visible results.

Consider: How would you find out whether you could now trust someone who had caused you suffering in the past? How important is it to make that assessment?

3. Not asked for, nor wanted: The other person may be unwilling, reluctant and not wanting peace. But remember that forgiveness doesn't have to be reciprocal. Our readiness for peace is no small accomplishment. Often it crumbles the other person's hostility.

4. No amends made: Forgiveness is a free gift of love or it is nothing of value. It is never a receipt for payment in full. It is an undeserved pardon, an unwarranted release. If you hold back forgiveness until the offender deserves it, then forget it; that's not forgiveness. Forgiveness is never earned.

5. Doesn't deserve: The motives of the person seeking forgiveness are unimportant, whether or not that person is sincere or deserving - forgive, forgive, forgive for your own sake. Before you judge and condemn the other person, just try a bit of understanding, instead of trying to understand. Understanding is acceptance in any condition, in any situation.

6. Fear of the unknown: We may be afraid of this unknown experience of forgiving, of doing the wrong thing, or looking foolish before others. Added to the fear is the feeling that forgiving is illogical and impractical.

7. Belief in retaliation: By nature we are selfish and proud. Forgiving requires unselfishness and humility. Not forgiving is easier than forgiving. Vengeance gives a cheap thrill - an eye for an eye. But it is forbidden in the Bible - Read Lev 19:18, Prov 20:22, 24:29, Mt 5:39, Rom 12:17, 1 Pet 3:9

Consider: Yes. We can knock a tooth for a tooth in retaliation. But what repayment can we demand from the person who has broken our home, or betrayed our daughter or ruined our reputation?

Third dimension in interpersonal relationship

When we read the story of Joseph in Gen Ch.42-45, we find that from the outset, Joseph's willingness to forgive is not in question, but his brothers' ability to receive it, is. So he searches for a way to move them towards the place where forgiveness will mean anything to them, beyond escape from retaliation. Joseph chooses to do everything possible to invite his brothers to a point where forgiveness can mean restored relationship.

When Joseph finally reveals who he is, his brothers are, of course terrified and rightly so. But instead of punishment, he dispenses grace. And as he asked the question, which is the crucial question for all of us in all sorts of situations, "Is my father still alive", he introduces a third dimension into their relationship. In all those situations in which we are dealing with those who have used or abused us, in major and minor ways, we need to be aware of that third dimension. If we have a living Father whom we love, how can we not respond to His other children in love?

That third dimension is inescapable for those of us who claim we are Christians. However, you have sinned against me, because my Father lives, I cannot hate you. And of course, our Father gives His children the grace to love. However, you have sinned against me, or I against you, the crucial question is this: "Is our Father still alive?" We cannot call God the Father and hate one of His children. To be sure, Jesus tells his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven." (Mt 5:44)

How to distinguish true forgiveness from false forgiveness?

We should be aware that our motives are always mixed, our thoughts are often conflicted and our emotions are ambivalent. Hence, we must learn to distinguish true forgiveness from false forgiveness.

Forgiveness is:

- not pretending that no wrong has been committed, Mt 18:15, Lk 17:3
- not overlooking sin, Acts 17:30

- not tolerating evil (not repenting), Rev 2:5
- not avoiding the problem or doing nothing in the face of sin.

1 True forgiveness cares for equal regard and mutual respect and joint movement towards right relationship. False forgiveness puts the offender down, under control for ever indebted and invariably feel guilty and shameful.

2 True forgiveness involves both parties to share responsibility and mutually seek, reach and experience forgiveness. False forgiveness calls one person to absorb the pain and adjust to injustice into submission and self-sacrifice.

3 In true forgiveness feelings are owned and clarified; demands are dealt with honestly, forthrightly and mutually, (Mt 18:15, Lk 17:3) False forgiveness denies that there is anger, acts as if it never happened, smiles as though it never hurt and fakes as though it is forgotten.

4 In true forgiveness, what was estranged is brought into fellowship back again; what was fragmented is whole again; what was alienated is reunited, with open channels of trust, love and acceptance. False forgiveness leaves people cautious, twice shy, afraid to risk free, open, spontaneous relationship, communication blocked and full acceptance/ trust not yet restored.

Terms associated with forgiveness

- Repentance - Sorrow for wrongdoing, in action
- Reparation - Making amends for the wrong
- Restitution - Compensation for the damage
- Retribution - Penalty, punishment
- Remission - Pardon, excuse, release, let off, an act of Grace and Mercy
- Grace - The offender gets something that he does not deserve
- Mercy - The offender does not get what he deserves
- Justice - The offender gets what he deserves (proper punishment)

SUMMING UP

- The goal of forgiving is Restoration of the relationship and not Remission of penalty. The function of forgiving is Reconciliation and not Retaliation.
- The central point of forgiving is on the offense and not the offender. The focus of forgiving is on how and why it happened and not on who is responsible

- The means of forgiving is by not remembering or not recalling the incident and not by forgetting, which is impossible.

Life application & Conclusion (Worksheet Item 3)

1 When do you feel closer to God? General answers are - when a loved one died or when lonely or when unjustly blamed. The experiences that bring people closer to God sound so much like experiences that bring people to the psychiatric clinics.

2 Should a Christian experience Rom 7:15? "I find myself doing the very wrong thing I hate?" Is it not part of normal Christian living to want to at one way and yet find ourselves doing the opposite? We want to open ourselves, to share our lives, yet we find ourselves closed off, living individualistically. We are pulled like Paul before his conversion.

3 Is it possible that you are not in speaking terms with another Christian? What are you gaining by offending? Go to that person with a smile, forget your hurt feelings and do your part to be friends again?

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

WHY DON'T WE SEEK FORGIVENESS?

- 1**  **Pain and Humiliation:**
 Real forgiveness is always painful for it involves a "little death". That is definitely not pleasant and easy to endure. Asking forgiveness is humiliating. Are we willing to pay this price?
 Lk 15:19; Gen 44:32-34
- 2**  **Not reciprocated:**
 There is a fear that the other person may withhold and not reciprocate. Remember that forgiveness takes time.
 Gen 32:7,11; Ch.33; Prov 18:16; 19:6; 21:14
- 3**  **Further conflict:**
 Forgiving doesn't mean putting ourselves in danger. But certain situations demand our efforts at forgiveness because the relationships represent a significant investment in our lives.
- 4**  **Looks like weakness:**
 Forgiving may look weak, but breaking the cycle of bitterness is true strength and a victory in the long run.
- 5**  **Whose blame?**
 Did you see it from the other person's point of view? Assessing blame is less important than a willingness to forgive.
- 6**  **Ignorance and awkwardness:**
 Forgiveness doesn't come naturally. We need to learn it. It is hard work.

WHY DO WE REFUSE TO FORGIVE?

- 1**  **Too recent and intense:**
 The emotional hurt may be recent and intense. Forgiveness takes time – like a wound that heals in stages.
 Lk 15:20
- 2**  **Risky:**
 No guarantee he will not do it again; he may repeat the wrong. Forgiving may not change the other person, and we may be hurt again.
 Luke 15:18-20
- 3**  **Not asked for, nor wanted:**
 The other person may be unwilling, reluctant and not wanting peace. But forgiveness doesn't have to be reciprocal.
- 4**  **No amends made:**
 Forgiveness is a free gift, not a receipt for payment. It is never earned or deserved.
- 5**  **Doesn't deserve:**
 The motives or sincerity of the person are unimportant. Forgive for your own sake.
- 6**  **Fear of the unknown:**
 Afraid of doing the wrong thing, looking foolish or that it is illogical and impractical.
- 7**  **Belief in retaliation:**
 Vengeance gives a cheap thrill, but it is forbidden. Forgiving requires humility and unselfishness.
 Lev 19:18; Prov 20:22, 24:29; Mt 5:39; Rom 12:17; 1 Pet 3:9

HOW TO DISTINGUISH TRUE FORGIVENESS FROM FALSE FORGIVENESS

TRUE FORGIVENESS		FALSE FORGIVENESS	
	Cares for equal regard and mutual respect and joint movement towards right relationship.	1 	Puts the offender down, under control for ever indebted and feel guilty and shameful.
	Both parties share responsibility and mutually seek, reach and experience forgiveness.	2 	Calls one person to absorb the pain and adjust to injustice into submission and self-sacrifice.
	Feelings are owned and clarified; demands dealt with honestly, forthrightly and mutually. (Mt 18:15; Lk 17:3)	3 	Denies that there is anger, acts as if it never happened, smiles as though it never hurt and fakes as though it is forgotten.
	What was estranged is brought into fellowship back again; what was fragmented is whole again; what was alienated is reunited, with open channels of trust, love and acceptance.	4 	Leaves people cautious, twice shy, afraid to risk free, open, spontaneous relationship, communication blocked and full acceptance/trust not yet restored.

TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH FORGIVENESS



Repentance - Sorrow for wrong doing, in action



Reparation - Making amends for the wrong



Restitution - Compensation for the damage



Retribution - Penalty, punishment



Remission - Pardon, excuse, release, let off, an act of Grace and Mercy



Grace - The offender gets something good that he does not deserve



Mercy - The offender does not get the punishment he deserves



Justice - The offender gets the punishment what he deserves

Worksheet 2 (Why do we need to forgive?)

1 GROUP BUILDING

Please write down the first thing that comes to your mind to complete the following sentences. Be honest with yourself, to gain the most from this exercise. Then share with others

- a) Feeling angry is _____
- b) I get angry when _____
- c) When I get angry _____

2 PERSONAL REFLECTION

People hurt us in many ways and we react to the same in many ways too. Feel free to add to the list. Then indicate 3 most common ways from your personal experience

a) The way people have hurt me is, by:

- | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ Ruining my reputation | ☐ Ingratitude | ☐ Rudeness |
| ☐ Breaking the promise | ☐ Unfairness | ☐ Gossiping |
| ☐ Causing embarrassment | ☐ Criticising in public | ☐ Telling lies |
| ☐ Lack of appreciation | ☐ False accusation | |
| ☐ Betrayed confidence | | |

b) When hurt, the way I react is, to:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| ☐ Ridicule | ☐ Blame them | ☐ Hold grudge | ☐ Revenge |
| ☐ Gossip | ☐ Self pity | ☐ Provoke a fight | ☐ Retaliate |
| ☐ Compromise | ☐ Sarcasm | ☐ Demand apology | ☐ Damage things |
| ☐ Avoid him | ☐ Non-cooperation | | |

c) One way I have not tried is to _____

3 THOUGHT PROVOKERS

- a) Who suffers more: The one who does not forgive or the one who is not forgiven?
- b) A Chinese Proverb: The one who pursues revenge should dig two graves

4 LIFE APPLICATION

- a) Do I often think about the hurt? ____ Yes / No
- b) When I think about the hurt, do I have strong feelings of anger?---- Yes / No
- c) Am I critical of myself or generally dissatisfied with myself?----- Yes / No
- d) Am I irritable - Do I get angry easily about little things?----- Yes / No
- e) Do I avoid the person who hurt me and not communicate with him?---- Yes / No
- f) Do I have symptoms of tension, sleeplessness, stomach disorder, etc.? Yes / No
- g) Do I imagine or wish difficulty or injury coming to that person?----- Yes / No
- h) Do I attack that person by spreading half truths or hostile humour?---- Yes / No

Chapter 2: Why do we need to forgive?

AIMS OF THE SESSION (Opening)

- To identify how people hurt us
- To reflect on how we react when hurt
- To give serious attention to commands of Scripture on forgiving one another
- To realise the solemnity of the convenient on forgiving and being forgiven
- To be aware of the tragic results of non-forgiving
- To be challenged to find the joy of forgiving

Understanding anger (Group Building) (Worksheet Item 1)

- Completing the sentence will help us to understand where our anger is coming from.
- By the way, we must notice that the word 'anger' is just one letter short of 'danger'.

Ways of hurting and reacting (Reflection) (Worksheet Item 2)

It is wrong to suppose that Christian relationship must be devoid of all conflict. All conflicts are not wrong, but can lead to personal and relational growth.

Illustration: A man was pursued by a lion. He knelt and prayed, "O Lord, please make this lion a Christian." When he opened his eyes, he saw the lion kneeling and its lips moving. When he listened carefully, the lion was praying, "Bless O Lord, this food for which I am exceedingly thankful."

- a) People hurt us in many ways and we react to the same in many ways. Feel free to add to the list.
- b) Indicating three most common ways from our own personal experience will be an eye-opener.
- c) The last sentence may be completed as: "to forgive"

4 C's of motivators for forgiving (Discussion)

There are four good reasons, all starting with the letter 'C'. They can help us to remove the blocks to forgiving.

- 1 Commands in Scriptures (Commitment)
- 2 Covenant of forgiving and being forgiven (Contract)
- 3 Consequences of non-forgiving (Cost)
- 4 Chain of benefits in forgiving

I Commands in Scripture

Christ has commanded us to forgive - in fact it is an ultimatum.

- Mt 6:12-15 It is the only condition in Lord's Prayer, the only item with a commentary
- Mt 18:15, Mk 18, 11:25, Lk 6:37 The only condition repeated in the teaching of Jesus
- Mt 5:21-26 Reconciliation precedes worship
- Rom 12:19-21 Vengeance is mine
- Eph 4:25-32 Forgive one another
- Col 3:13 Forbear one another, as Christ forgave you

There is no question of whether we want to or not, whether we feel like it or not. It is the sheer act of the will. 1 Jn 1:7, We can't nurse a grudge against another person and the same time walk in the light of God. 1 Pet 2:21, We have to follow Christ's examples

II Covenant of forgiving and being forgiven

Mt 18:23-35, Lk 17:3,4 Read the Parable of "The Unforgiving Servant". The servant is punished because of his failure to manifest forgiveness in his relations with those who are indebted to him. Forgiving and being forgiven go hand in hand. They interlock. They cannot be separated. The man who refuses forgiveness to his brother cuts himself off from the forgiveness of others. An unforgiving heart is unforgivable. There is no question of time or priority; they are one.

Mt 12:31,32 The sin is unforgivable not because of the action done (be it murder, adultery or apostasy), since such actions are not outside the realms of forgiveness. Rather, what makes the sin unforgivable is people living in a way that persistently denies any need for forgiveness. The implication of both the above texts seems to be that, while repentance and confession are conditions of receiving God's forgiveness, they are indispensable means of acknowledging our need for forgiveness and hence embodying that forgiveness in our relations with others.

Only if we have no need for forgiveness ourselves, do we dare consider hesitating to forgive another. We do need forgiveness constantly. Don't we? To receive forgiveness, one must be willing to give forgiveness.

Consider: ~ Like the servant do we ask for mercy for ourselves, but refuse to grant it when it is asked of us?

- Are there places in our lives where we are unreasonably demanding of someone?
- Are there places where we need to loosen our grip, our expectations, our demands?
- Are there places in our lives, where people are suffering because of us and our unforgiving attitude?

Illustration: A clerk was caught embezzling. His boss, a Christian calling him, promised no dismissal or handing him over to the police and asked him, "if he was guilty?" Shamefully he said, "Yes." For the next question, "If I take you back, can I trust you?" he said "Yes." The boss said, "You are the second person who has failed and has been pardoned in this company. I was the first. I am showing you mercy because I received mercy."

Remember when you were forgiven. Recall those times with gratitude when someone could have held something against you and did not. Be specific in this reflection - something forgiven at home when you were little, something forgiven at school, something you confided to another and he or she love you anyway, someone in the office who did not hold you in contempt for the thing you said or the thing you did.

III Cost of non-forgiving (Thought Provokers) (Worksheet Item 3)

- a) Who suffers more: the one who does not forgive or the one who is not forgiven?
- b) A Chinese Proverb: The one who pursues revenge should dig two graves.

Hate is a prolonged form of suicide. Like an unchecked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity. Not to forgive is to resent, to keep scores of wrongs, to plot revenge, to remember the tiniest slight, to retaliate.

Look at the chain of consequences of non-forgiving:

- a) Emotional consequences: Anger, Resentment, Bitterness, Depression, Frustration, Pessimism
- b) Biological consequences: Migraine, Loss of sleep, Nervousness, High blood pressure, Ulcer, Cancer
- c) Mental consequences: Worry, Irritableness, No enjoyment, Less pleasant person

- d) Social consequences: Broken friendship, Loneliness, Separation, Distrust, Negative pattern or behaviour, it has a way of involving or co-opting others into our strategy; it brings into the network of persons into taking sides, by our manipulation.
- e) Physical consequences: Wrinkled forehead, Clenched fist/teeth, Set jaws, Tight throat, Rapid breath, Increased pulse rate, Quivering stomach
- f) Spiritual consequences: It doesn't bring the best in us; it affects the good we do and the good we want to do, by diverting our motives and by dividing us; it leads to a judgmental spirit; and our judgment will be without mercy; if we ourselves have been shown no mercy; it limits our service to God. (Lk 6:37,38, James 2:13)

IV Chain of benefits in forgiving

Somerset Maugham has said that the successful people in life are invariably gracious and humble and forgiving. It's the losers who are hostile, who hold grudges and harbour resentments.

"Love or perish" - That's our choice. It is psychologically true. If we don't love, we begin to shrivel up, because we focus our lives on our hates instead of our loves. When we live by our hurts, nurturing grudges, planning revenge, we undermine our psychological, spiritual and physical health. When we live by our loves, our well-being increases.

When Jesus taught, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors", that advice is not for the sake of our debtors, but for our own peace of mind. It frees us from resentment, from false and unnecessary guilt and from a thousand forms of bondage in which we trap ourselves. Forgiveness has tremendous healing power, it can heal the pain of rejection; it can heal the stress of tension of conflict; it can heal fear and emptiness.

Gen 33:6,7 When friends or family members are alienated from one another, this usually affects other relationships as well. The families of Jacob and Esau for example had never met. Reconciliation between the principals in a dispute, can open doors, for the development of other relationships.

It leads to freedom and growth in Christian maturity. By nature we are selfish; but forgiveness demands unselfishness. Thus it develops and builds our self-worth and confidence on which we erect our mature life. We become new persons. The world becomes new; the joy we read about becomes ours. (2 Cor 5:17,18)

Illustration: A drunken driver killed an only child in the family by his rash driving. During his jail term, the judge ordered that every other weekend he should watch an autopsy performed on a wreck victim, to ride with an ambulance crew on emergency runs and to work as a volunteer in a hospital emergency room and also to share his experience with high school students. The parents of the victim drove him to the church every Sunday, set a place for him at their dinner table, until one day, he threw his arms around the parents and begged for forgiveness.

Life application & Conclusion (Worksheet Item 4)

Check your answers as to "Yes" or "No". If your answers are mostly "Yes", then you need to change your behaviour and to apologise for your sins against the other person so as to forgive.

Why do we need to forgive?

4 C's – Motivators for Forgiving

1 Commands in Scriptures (Commitment)



Christ has commanded us to forgive – in fact it is an ultimatum.

- ✓ **Mt 6:12-15** – The only condition in Lord's Prayer
- ✓ **Mt 18:15; Mk 11:25; Lk 6:37** – Repeated condition in the teaching of Jesus
- ✓ **Mt 5:21-26** – Reconciliation precedes worship
- ✓ **Rom 12:19-21** – Vengeance is mine
- ✓ **Eph 4:25-32** – Forgive one another
- ✓ **Col 3:13** – Forbear one another, as Christ forgave you

“It is the sheer act of the will – whether we feel like it or not. We cannot walk in the light of God and nurse a grudge (1 Jn 1:7)!”,



2 Covenant of Forgiving and Being Forgiven (Contract)



Forgiving and being forgiven go hand in hand. They cannot be separated.

- 📖 **Mt 18:23-35; Lk 17:3,4** – Parable of the Unforgiving Servant
- 📖 **Mt 12:31,32** – A heart that denies any need for forgiveness is unforgivable.
- ✓ We constantly need forgiveness.
- ✓ To receive forgiveness, we must be willing to give forgiveness.
- ✓ Ask for mercy for ourselves – and grant it to others.

“I am showing you mercy because I received mercy.”



3 Consequences of Non-Forgiving (Cost)



Who suffers more?

The one who does not forgive!

“Hate is a prolonged form of suicide.”

	Emotional	Anger, bitterness, depression, frustration, pessimism
	Biological	Migraine, loss of sleep, high BP, ulcer, cancer
	Mental	Worry, irritableness, no enjoyment
	Social	Broken relationships, loneliness, distrust
	Physical	Wrinkled forehead, tension, rapid breath, increased pulse
	Spiritual	Judgmental spirit, limits our service to God (Lk 6:37,38; James 2:13)

➤ *“The one who pursues revenge should dig two graves.”*

4 Chain of Benefits in Forgiving



- ✓ **Brings peace of mind** – frees us from resentment and many bondages.
- ✓ **Heals wounds** – rejection, stress, fear and emptiness.
- ✓ **Builds healthy relationships** – opens doors for family and community.
- ✓ **Develops Christian maturity** – from selfishness to unselfishness.
- ✓ **Increases well-being** – psychological, spiritual and physical health.
- ✓ **Builds self-worth and confidence** – we become new persons (2 Cor 5:17,18).
- ✓ **Makes our lives gracious, humble and successful.**

“Love or perish – That's our choice!”



“Forgive, as the Lord forgave you.” – Colossians 3:13



Worksheet 3 (Basic principles of forgiving)

1 GROUP BUILDING

There will always be hurt. The question is how to handle it. Thus it is useful to know your style when it comes to hurt. On each spectrum below, put an 'X' as the spot that best describes how in times of such crisis. Share with your group if they agree with your estimate where you see yourself

Understanding -----	Unreasonable
Get soft -----	Get tough
Reflect -----	Act
Retreat -----	Attack
Listen -----	Talk
Quiet -----	Explosive
Forgive -----	Retaliate

2 SELF REFLECTION

When hurt, there are certain things which we should or should not do. Of the following, indicate the ones which you find difficult to practice:

- ☐ To see fault in myself
- ☐ To admit my own fault to others
- ☐ To speak the truth in love
- ☐ To love the one who has hurt me
- ☐ No to tell others about the hurt
- ☐ Not to engage myself in self-pity
- ☐ Not to keep dwelling in mind about the hurt

3 FAMILY SITUATION

Who is the hardest (mark H) and the easiest (mark E) for you to forgive?

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ☐ Brother | ☐ Sister | ☐ Father | ☐ Mother . |
| ☐ Children | ☐ Myself | ☐ Neighbour | ☐ Friend |
| ☐ Stranger | ☐ Husband/wife | ☐ In laws | |

4 LIFE APPLICATION

- a) What do you think of a parent ordering a child to tell someone that he or she is sorry?
- b) What should a person do, if another attempts to reconcile too quickly or too cheaply?
- c) What steps are you going to take to reconcile with a brother/sister estranged?

Chapter 3: Basic principles of forgiving

AIMS OF THE SESSION (Opening)

- To explore the three promises we make in the process of forgiving
- To identify how the past, present and future are merged in forgiveness
- To give importance to different stages essential for success in forgiving
- To examine why forgiveness cannot be earned

Handling the hurt (Group Building) (Worksheet Item 1)

After completing the exercise, let each member share briefly how he or she marked each spectrum line, covering as many as time permits. Encourage people not just to share where they put the 'X', but why, and also see if others agree with their estimate where they see themselves.

Principle 1: Forgiveness is a promise

Forgiveness does involve a commitment / a promise, which is threefold:

- a) I won't dwell in my mind (No self pity)
- b) I won't tell others (No gossip)
- c) I won't raise the issue with you (No retaliation)

Certain things are difficult to follow (Reflections) Worksheet Item 2

When hurt there are certain things which we should or should not do. Indicate in the worksheet the ones which you find difficult to practice and share with the group.

Principle 2: Forgiving includes past, present and future

a) Past. One of the hardest things we have to live with is our past memories. One of our heaviest burdens is the past - hurts, heartaches, offenses, shame, troubles. Or perhaps only one hurt, one memory, one seemingly insignificant and yet persistent and deeply troubling memory. As we remember, recall, review, recycle and rework past experiences, we are hold on to them emotionally even though we know rationally they are past. We can't seem to let it go, but we need to let it go. Holding on to the past is resentment.

b) Present: A bad situation is never corrected by pretending that it does not exist, nor do we ignore any offense committed against us, as though nothing had happened. We must encourage the offender to deal with the sin in a biblical manner and fulfil his obligation to the one he has offended. It means acknowledging evil, for exactly what it was, and in the process, creating the atmosphere for a fresh start and a new beginning for the right relationship.

c) Future: The future possibility is that the memories of the past even though they are of events long over and done, can be healed today and we can be set free for the future. The goal is to restore the relationship and our intentions are truly genuine. Even if the other person doesn't want to be reconciled, we are left with the freedom of no longer holding a grudge or carrying a resentment.

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
Memories	Realities	Possibilities
What was, begone	What is, be	What will be, come
Let go	Accept	Work for
No holding on to past injury	No demand imposed	No revenge attempted
No questions asked	Right relationship worked out	Future intentions genuine

Principle 3: Forgiving is a process with definite stages

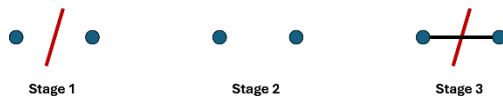
Forgiving is a complex and demanding process and not a single act or stage - too large for any human to take in a single bound. Forgiveness is a journey of many steps, each of which can be extremely difficult, all of which are to be taken carefully, thoughtfully and with deep reflection. Rather than a single step, a whole flight of steps confront us if forgiveness is to truly occur. Each builds on what precedes; each makes possible that which follows.

Forgiveness is:

- Offered, when Grace affirms love
- Accepted, when Repentance turns towards that love
- Experienced, when Reconciliation occurs

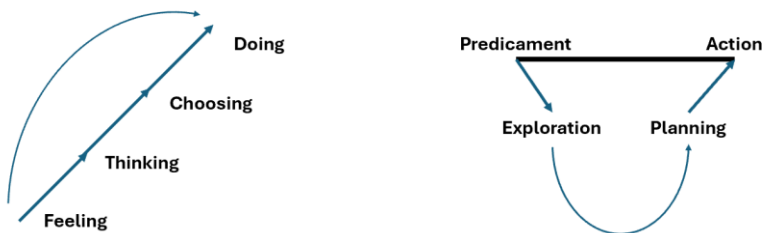
Even though there is no set pattern of forgiving, it is usually a process over a period of time and not something happens at a particular instant. As such we cannot bypass a step for quick reconciliation. We should not move with haste or allow ourselves to be pushed fast. If we ignore certain steps, then the healing process

will be half-hearted and short-lived and that accounts for the many shaky reconciliation that topple at the slightest ill-wind.



Sometimes in our eagerness to patch up the differences, we rush toward reconciliation without taking into account what has to be forgiven. There has to be a pause between the hurt and reconciliation, so that forgiveness can take place. Without forgiveness there can be no real peace and no lasting reconciliation. For example the stage 1 is the unreconciled situation, due to the hurt. A barrier of bitterness between the parties exists. Without reaching the stage 2 of reconciled condition (i.e., the barrier removed by repentance and forgiveness) we should not attempt the new relationship. If we ignore the Stage 2, then the healing process of Stage 3 will be half-hearted and shaky and short-lived.

When we are forced (urged or induced) to do without giving careful thought and then making a decision about it - that is, bypassing the thinking and choosing channels or short-circuiting the process, we sometimes cause a blow-up. As you notice in the drawing, the impulsive person goes directly from feeling (due to urging) to doing without moving through thinking and choosing channels (i.e.; if it looks good, he buys it, if it tastes good, he eats it; if he feels good, he does it) He is a creature of feelings he goes through life out of control.



Principle 4: Forgiveness is a free gift of love

Forgiveness is not negotiable. It need not wait for confession or an apology from the offender. Don't think about whether he deserves to be forgiven. Step out in faith and act as a forgiver, instead of a judge; as a blessing, instead of a curse. Judgment belongs to God.

Gen 45:4,5 Here Joseph comes very near to "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Far from resentment for the brothers' treacherous conduct in the past, he urges them to forgive themselves.

Eph 4:31,32 "Let all bitterness ... even as God for Christ sake hath forgiven you." The man who follows Christ in life hurries to forgive Quickly. Unhesitatingly. Immediately. Christ's way was the way of giving forgiveness even before being asked, and even when it was not or never would be asked by the other.

Principle 5: Forgiveness is a choice and a struggle

Will I let past hurts control me and keep me acting in self-centred ways or will I let the peace and love of the Holy Spirit control my future? Let us stop and think of the way God heals the memories (of past hurts) in Scriptures:

Isa 40:11, 48:10 Israel constantly goes back to its moments of slavery and wanderings in the desert and senses that even in these tragic times she came closer to Jehovah. Those early Jews took it as time for understanding Jehovah's faithfulness and for forming the bondage of a great nation.

Gen 45 Consider the story of Joseph sold into slavery by his brothers. Now this betrayal could have locked Joseph into a revenge, bitterness and distrust, causing him to reject his brothers when they came to ask for food. But Joseph healed that memory; he went back and saw the redemptiveness of being sold into slavery - it placed him in Egypt so that he could feed Israel. Gen 50:20 "You intended to harm; but God intended it for good."

Similarly, Paul discovered that the tragedy of Adam brings a Christ and the Cross brings Resurrection.

Lk 15 Christ's story of the Prodigal son exemplifies his struggle. Both the elder brother and the father look back at the same memory (that the younger son demanding his share of the property and walking out on his father). Now the father looks at the change and celebrates; on the other hand, the elder brother refuses forgiveness and suffers.

We must make a choice. To see only the dark side of the past personal hurt or see it in a new positive light and free from the wounds of the past. Some can grasp that death, loneliness or times of injustice could bring us closer to God and see them as blessing and some others can see them only as a tragedy.

Principle 6: Forgiveness begins at home

Family Situation (Reflection) Worksheet Item 4: Forgiveness begins at home because hurt begins at home. Forgiveness is a special kind of love that ask of us to remain open, vulnerable and caring; even though we have been wounded, offended, hurt and pained.

Forgiveness begins at whatever is home base now - a family conflict, hurt at school misunderstanding with friends or neighbours, tension at work place. We usually get angry with people we care about and are close to, rather than strangers. It takes a considerable amount of courage to tell a loved one that we are angry with him or her. Hurt feelings are the main reason for 100% of our marital fights. But we talk about it not even 20%. The rest of the time, we come out with burn toast, saltless food, nasty comments about in-laws. There is always some hope of finding a solution. Look at the examples set by Cain and Abel, Abraham and Lot, Isaac and Ishmael, and Esau and Jacob.

Tragically a lot of parents are unable to say, "I'm sorry" or to initiate the forgiveness process. Some have punished children, demanding silence and an end to their professed innocence, saying "we know you're guilty", only to discover later that the child was telling the truth.

Learning how to live in Christian forgiveness belongs properly in home. Couples must teach each other and in turn train their children, who will share it with their neighbours and spread it throughout the community. Any family reconciliation must begin with one wronged member choosing to ignore personal pain and choosing to maintain commitment to the family. Love can find a more productive way to resolve concerns. "Constructive arguing" is arguing with a goal in mind - pleasing as much as possible on both sides; it is similar to negotiating labour dispute; both sides make input, both sides work toward a solution that is mutually beneficial.

Prov 22:6 Thus the teaching of forgiveness in the home is of great importance. Less by words and more by action and practice. Christian parents can provide a foundation for their children that will stabilize them towards forgiveness and reconciliation.

Principle 7: Forgiveness is a way of life/ a habit

Forgiveness should not be confined to a word to be spoken, a feeling to be felt, or an isolated action to be done, rather, it involves a way of life to be lived in fidelity

(faithfulness, devotion, allegiance and loyalty) to God's Kingdom. For Christians, forgiveness is not simply an action, an emotional judgment, or a declarative utterance - though Christian forgiveness includes all those dimensions. Rather, forgiveness is a habit that must be practiced over time within the disciplines of Christian community. Forgiveness aims to restore communion on the part of humans with God, with one another, and with the whole Creation. It is to recognise that, just as we need to develop good habits of health so as to counteract and challenge the forces of disease, so we need good habits of forgiveness so as to counteract and challenge the forces of sin and evil in our midst.

Healing and re-creating is not God acting without us. They also invite, and require, our practices, which - by the guiding, judging and consoling work of the Holy Spirit - enable us to witness to God's forgiving, recreating work and to be transformed into holy people.

The practice of forgiveness entails unlearning all those things that divide and destroy communion and learning to see and live as forgiven and forgiving people. The goal of this unlearning and learning is the holiness of communion - with God, with others, and with the whole Creation.

Forgiveness cannot be confined to a moment - even a moment at the conclusion of a long, timeful process. For we must continue to embody that forgiveness into the future. To forgive for the moment is not difficult. But to go on forgiving, to forgive the same offense again every time it recurs to the memory - there's the real tussle. It is indeed a struggle, but a struggle that is significantly ameliorated if we are involved in the ongoing practices of forgiveness that enable us continually to locate our lives in the practice of forgiveness.

Life application (Worksheet Item 5)

- a) What do you think of a parent ordering a child to tell someone that he or she is sorry. In what way does this prepare children to learn the process of forgiveness?
- b) What should a person do if another attempts to reconcile a fractured relationship too quickly or too cheaply?
- c) Can you think of a brother or sister or friend from whom you have become estranged. What steps can you take toward reconciliation? What might be a source of pain if those steps are taken?



BASIC PRINCIPLES OF FORGIVING



1 Principle 1: Forgiveness is a promise

Forgiveness is a commitment / a promise, which is threefold:



I won't dwell in my mind (No self pity)



I won't tell others (No gossip)



I won't raise the issue with you (No retaliation)



REFLECTION

When hurt there are certain things which we should or should not do. Indicate in the worksheet the ones which you find difficult to practice and share with the group.

2 Principle 2: Forgiving includes past, present and future



PAST Memories

- Hard to let go
- Holding on to the past is resentment.



PRESENT Realities

- Acknowledge the wrong
- Create a fresh start for the right relationship.



FUTURE Possibilities

- Can be healed today
- Set free for the future
- Freedom from grudges

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
What was, began	What is, be	What will be, come
Let go	Accept	Work for
No holding on to past injury	No demand imposed	No revenge attempted
No questions asked	Right relationship worked out	Future intentions genuine

3 Principle 3: Forgiving is a process with definite stages

Forgiveness is a journey of many steps, not a single act.



Offered, when Grace affirms love



Accepted, when Repentance turns towards that love



Experienced, when Reconciliation occurs

It is usually over a period of time. We cannot bypass steps for quick reconciliation.

HURT (Unreconciled)

→ REPENTANCE & FORGIVENESS (Reconciled)

→ NEW RELATIONSHIP (Healed)

4 Principle 4: Forgiveness is a free gift of love

- ♥ Forgiveness is not negotiable.
- ♥ It need not wait for confession or an apology.
- ♥ Don't think whether he deserves to be forgiven.
- ♥ Step out in faith and act as a forgiver, not as a judge; as a blesser, not as a cursor.



Gen 45:4,5 Joseph forgave his brothers and urged them to forgive themselves.

Eph 4:31,32 "Let all bitterness ... even as God for Christ sake hath forgiven you."



Forgive quickly. Unhesitatingly. Immediately. Christ forgive even before being asked.

5 Principle 5: Forgiveness is a choice and a struggle

We can choose to let past hurts control us or let the peace and love of the Holy Spirit control our future.

COST OF HOLDING ON TO HURT



Emotional
Anger, bitterness, resentment, depression, frustration



Mental
Worry, irritability, no enjoyment, pessimism



Social
Broken friendship, loneliness, distrust, negative pattern, manipulation



Biological
Migraine, loss of sleep, high BP, ulcer, cancer



Physical
Tension, headache, tight throat, rapid breath, quivering stomach



Spiritual
Hinders good, judgmental spirit, limits our service to God



Isa 40:11, 48:10

God heals memories and turns past pain into understanding His faithfulness and forming a better future.



Principle 6: Forgiveness begins at home

- Hurt begins at home – in family, with friends, neighbours, school or workplace.
- Forgiveness asks us to remain open, vulnerable and caring even when we are hurt.
- It takes courage to forgive those we love and are close to. Hurt feelings cause most of our conflicts.
- Parents and couples must model, teach and practice forgiveness.
- Any family reconciliation must begin with one person choosing love over personal pain.



Prov 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.



7 Principle 7: Forgiveness is a way of life/ a habit

- Forgiveness is a way of life lived in faithfulness to God's Kingdom.
- It is a habit practiced over time within the disciplines of Christian community.
- It restores communion – with God, with others, and with all creation.
- We must continue to embody forgiveness into the future.
- It requires unlearning what divides and learning to live as forgiven and forgiving people.



Healing and re-creating is not God acting without us. By the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to witness to God's forgiving, recreating work and be transformed into holy people.

Worksheet 4 (Rules for forgiving)

1. GROUP BUILDING

- a) If you had to call someone in midnight for emergency, whom would you call?
- b) In a similar situation who would call you?

2. REFLECTION ON RATIONALIZATION

We rationalize our not-forgiving attitude by excuses. Which are yours? Mark your two most common ones?

- ☐ I didn't mean to offend; it happened when I was upset
- ☐ It is far better and now things are improving
- ☐ It's just a minor offense and doesn't matter much
- ☐ Is it not enough if I determine not to repeat it?
- ☐ Both are equally wrong - I was wrong and so was he/she
- ☐ I am not guilty, she is just being too sensitive
- ☐ The other person was mostly wrong and to be blamed

3. PERSONAL INVENTORY

Circle **Y** for Yes, **N** for No and **M** for may be. Are you a person who:

- a) demands apology before granting forgiveness? Y N M
- b) thinks admitting fault is weakness Y N M
- c) is merciful, compassionate and avoids conflict Y N M
- d) has experienced being forgiven by anyone Y N M
- e) equates strength with non-forgiveness Y N M
- f) gets angry easily and provokes conflict Y N M
- g) pretends everything is OK, when it is not Y N M
- h) believes only God forgives and not man Y N M

4. QUIZ ON TENSION (Say yes or no)

- a) Do little things irritate you e) Do you feel cheated or deceived
- b) Do you have trouble sleeping? f) Do you often annoy those who are closest to you?
- c) Do you worry a lot? g) Do you suffer frequent headaches, indigestion?
- d) Are you a frequent complainer?
- e) Do you feel tired and moody in the mornings?

5. LIFE APPLICATION

- a) Make a list of people whom you hate or find it difficult to love or forgive?
- b) Mention specific reason/offense you need to forgive for each person
- c) Tell God that you forgive each one of them
- d) When you have finished praying, burn the list and get rid of it for ever.

Chapter 4: Common rules for forgiving

AIMS OF THE SESSION

- To pave the way for getting forgiveness off the ground and on its way
- To be enlightened on how to view the hurt in a new and fresh light
- To acquire the skill of reporting the pain of hurt without mixing it with negative feelings
- To learn to differentiate between major and minor hurts
- To become aware that apology is an act of strength

Fantasy Questionnaire (Group Building) (Worksheet Item 1)

Answering these questions gives your fantasies full flight and offers the imagination a chance to come up with all sorts of significant history-giving.

Like other procedures in life, forgiving has a few preliminary ground rules. These ground rules are especially important to consider in the beginning stages of forgiveness, because it is often abandoned as an idea before it ever becomes a practice.

Here are the rules forming an acronym "PARDON"

Put yourself in the place of other person

Admit the pain and acknowledge the hurt

Report the pain and hurt; not the anger or revenge

Disregard unintentional and minor hurts

Offer apology and grow into maturity

Notice forgiving is not a feeling but duty

Rule 1: Put yourself in the place of the other person

If we are to forgive freely, we need a tolerance of others as generous as that tolerance we display towards our own errors. We excuse ourselves saying that we didn't intend the error or it happened in a moment of stress or we weren't feeling right at that time. To extend such understanding towards those who hurt us can lead to forgiveness.

Ways of rationalising (Reflection) (Worksheet Item 2)

We rationalise our not-forgiving attitude by excuses. The common ones are:

- a) I didn't mean to offend: It happened when I was upset. This is double standard and inconsistency. We don't give the same reasoning to the other person

- b) It's better now; things are improving: Perhaps this is God's way of preparing you to forgive
- c) It's just a minor issue; it doesn't matter much: If so, why is it eating at your conscience?
- d) It happened a long time ago: Forget it: If so, why are you still remembering it? Obviously it must be serious to call for attention
- e) Is it not enough if I determine not to do it again: No. That'll never right the wrong. The other person may not know your mind nor your intention or purposing
- f) Both are equally wrong: I was wrong, so were you: this is nothing but simple pride. To say 'Please forgive me If I have wronged you' is a slap in the face
- g) He won't understand: You may be surprised; but if he doesn't, leave that with God
- h) I am not guilty, the other person is just being too sensitive: Remember an innocent party is rare. Be sure you haven't contributed in some way, regardless of how small, to the problem. Any way take the initiative.
- i) The other person was mostly wrong and to be blamed: Still you must live with your conscience. Confess the 10% or 20% of which you are guilty. He may surprise you and ask to be forgiven for his 80% or 90%
- j) I'll do it later: Tomorrow never comes. Additional sins may come. Death may for ever prevent reconciliation. God forbids putting it off. Later may not be as good as now. To delay is ungodlike, dangerous and the offense gets magnified and blown out of all proportion; its importance is reduced; complicates the problem and makes the reconciliation difficult.
- k) No one is perfect: True. Your standard of perfection is low. You're to become Christ-like.

Put yourself in another person's shoes. Ask yourself whether the fault is entirely on the other person or whether there is some blame on your part that needs to be honestly faced. Let us see others in new light from the view point of one who feels the hurt, injustice and bitterness. Forgiveness becomes possible when we see the one who hurt us as one in need of freedom - most probably more so than ourselves. Maybe, he is not free to love you, or possibly anyone, because of fear, prejudice, lack of education, isolation, insecurity, unhealed hurts of the past, poor physical health etc.

Rule 2: Admit the pain and Acknowledge the hurt

It is far better to acknowledge the hurt and the pain than to put a bandage over an 'infected' spirit, an unhealed heart, that might rupture later. Like a visit to the dentist, the drilling is uncomfortable, but the end result is beneficial. Never deny

or bury your hurt - but be honest about them. Speak of them at the time they occurred. If we are wrong about what we think are facts, let us be open to correction. We must learn the truth; face the truth; and admit the truth. Acknowledging the hurt is the necessary first beginning.

A confrontation of persons involved is a necessary if they are to experience the full measure of forgiveness. In that confrontation, the parties involved must become aware of each other - truly aware of pain caused and experienced. Then they must share the pain to the fullest dimension. To say "I'm sorry" without genuinely entering into the pain of the other person involved is empty and does nothing to restore unity and oneness. There is no cheap grace; there is no painless forgiveness. Broken relationships are painful and are only restored through the experience of suffering.

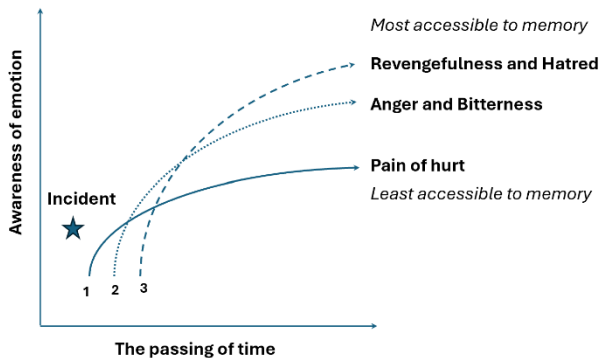
Gen 43-45 Joseph's evident toughness towards his brothers may very well have been necessary to the healing process. For two parties to be reconciled, they need to meet at the point of pain. Forgiving does not mean ignoring the evil that was done. It means acknowledging the evil for exactly what it was and in the process, declaring that it would no longer stand in the way of relationship. By handling the way he did, Joseph could demonstrate the depth of pain he had experienced and also determine the capacity of brothers to be in touch with their father's pain.

Forgiveness does not always mean turning the other cheek Mt 5:39. For the New Testament offers process of confronting (occasionally with witness) those who have wronged us. Mt 18:15-18 All depends on the situation and the people involved. We have a right to tell others they have hurt us. And we have a responsibility to tell Christians so they do not continue to sin against us. Lk 17:3,4 When we are wronged, we must frankly face the effect of what has happened. If we have been hurt, let us admit it.

Rule 3: Report the pain of hurt; not anger or revenge

Notice on the drawing below - seconds after the incident which arouses the hurt feelings (pain) another feeling (anger) skyrockets into awareness. It overlays the hurt feelings so that one is no longer aware of the hurt. He is angry and quite aware of his new emotion, anger. A bit later, he may begin to want to retaliate against the offender. This new emotion revengefulness can trigger some negative action, if one does not keep it under control.

When someone says or does something that deeply hurt us, for instance at point 1, we may not say anything about it. Then a little later, at point 2, we feel the



bitterness leading to anger, because the other person hurt us. If we do not report our anger, we may experience yet another feeling at point 3 coming up inside us - that is hatred leading to revengefulness and at that time, we begin to hurt the other person. When we recollect the event, we encounter the last emotion first; because it is the one foremost and freshest in our memory - the original hurt has been layered over by other emotions and we're out of touch with it. Therefore, whenever we think of the event, we start retaliating the other person in revenge.

One way to break this cycle is to think back beyond the revenge and anger to the event - and get in touch with the hurt, we felt at the time and report the hurt to the other person, by saying something like: "What you said (did) really hurt me." If we pinpoint exactly what hurt us, there is still the possibility of getting some communication going; whereas revengeful feelings may close off any possibility of a dialogue and there is little chance of resolving the issue.

Consider: Why do husbands and wives fight with each other? It seems to be about one thing namely - "You have hurt my feelings. What you did or didn't makes me feel as if I don't matter." Hurt feelings are seldom what people talk about in a marital fight; but beneath all the hostile rhetoric, that's what is usually going on.

Are you a peacemaker? (Personal Inventory) (Worksheet Item 3)

Gó back to your answers on the worksheet and look at your "maybe"s. Be sure that each time you used a maybe, you had no other choice and that it was not an excuse for a yes or a no answer. Ask someone you know to code and guess the answers that you made. What did you learn?

Illustration: A tenant and a landlord had a quarrel over whose responsibility it was to remove a pile of rubbish left in the alley, by a previous tenant. This was going to

be a bitter fight, to prove a point of principle. A sensitive neighbour quietly loaded the rubbish with his bucket and carried it to the bin at the street corner. The war was deflated. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Rule 4: Disregard unintentional and minor hurts

We need not confront others over every little difference, annoyance or slight. We should overlook or disregard and take no notice of some non-moral peculiarities in others. A friend can hurt us and we can hurt our friends sometimes without realizing it. The question is, can the friendship survive the wounds?

Rom 10:12 "Love covers multitude of sins". Love allows for personal differences. Plainly every rub and offense cannot be raised and settled. We must learn in love to forgive many slights, insults and defaults. Only if the matter props up in our mind day after day, hour after hour, when love just cannot overlook, then it is time to confront and remove the wedge by reconciliation.

Lk 23:34 When Jesus prayed for his enemies, "They know not what they do" we find the principle that we should ignore the offenses that people commit unknowingly or unintentionally against us and not require them to meet the requirements of forgiveness.

There are also both moral offenses and moral annoyances, the latter may be irritating but not have moral implications. For instance a person may be offended if someone told lies about him; but he should not be offended if someone sang off-key.

TENSION (Quiz) (Worksheet Item 4)

If you answered "yes" even to one of the questions in the quiz, you may well be experiencing a build up of tension

Rule 5: Offer apology and grow into maturity

Offering an apology is an act of strength and it helps build greater maturity. The important part of an apology is not what we say, but what we mean. The words of an apology tell the other person about our feelings, attitudes and intentions. The following Acronym "SORRY" will help us to remember the five elements of a sincere apology.

- **Soon:** The earlier we apologise, the better. Because it means changing our attitudes. But if we don't do it soon, we leave ourselves exposed to the cancer of resentment
- **Offer:** We must want to apologise. An apology that is pulled out of us is nothing more than words
- **Regret:** This means we wish we hadn't and we won't in the future. We cannot undo the past, but honest regret is a covenant to make future behaviour better than past behaviour.
- **Restitution:** We should do the best we can to restore the situation back to its original condition - to compensate for the damage done.
- **Yourself.** The person who made the mess must clear it up. No one else should have to, and chances are, no one else will.

So then, apology means, "Soon Offer Regret and Restitution Yourself." Our words of apology should be spoken simply, specifically and briefly, so that neither party is unduly embarrassed. It is worth the effort to apologise. Yes, it helps the other person, but our benefit is even greater. It frees us from guilt and shame about our own behaviour and usually from their retaliation or from our fear of their retaliation.

Rule 6: Notice that forgiveness is not a feeling but a duty

Forgiveness is a duty, a command, a commitment. There is no hypocrisy in granting forgiveness against our feelings. We get out of bed every morning for work against our feelings; but that does not make the act hypocritical. It would be hypocritical, only if we pretend that we enjoy getting up.

Remember that we can love and be angry at the same time. Most of us have a certain mixture of love and anger in all our intimate relationships. Loving someone doesn't mean we love everything about that person. Remind yourself that forgiveness is not a feeling. It is a choice - a decision made by one person to repent and a decision made by the other to forgive. Joseph chose to forgive in spite of his feelings of anger, grief or sorrow.

If we are honest, we will recognise that there are times when we can forgive with the will, but we cannot forgive without emotions. That is, "I'll forgive you but I'm going to stay out of your way", or "I'll forgive you, but you'd better not do it again" When some situation arises, we have to pray, "Lord, I don't want to forgive him - not after all he has done to me." That's all right. That is honest. The Lord will say to you, "Do you want to want to forgive him?" You may say "Yes, Lord, because you want me to, I want to want to." That's OK. God accepts it.

Life application & Conclusion (Worksheet Item 5)

- a) Take a few moments in private. Write down the names of those in your family, your church, your neighbourhood or your work place, whom you hate or don't like
- b) Mention specific reason or offense, you need to forgive for each person
- c) Pray this prayer: "O Lord, heavenly Father, teach me the meaning of loving. Help me to learn to unlock the doors to my closed heart." And then tell God that you forgive.
- d) When you have finished praying over your list, burn it. Get rid of it for ever.

COMMON RULES FOR FORGIVING

1

Rule 1: Put yourself in the place of the other person



- Try to understand the other person's situation and feelings.
- Avoid excuses and double standards.
- Ask honestly: Is the fault entirely on them or is there some blame on my part?
- See the other person as one in need of freedom too.

Common excuses we use

- I didn't mean to offend
- It's better now; things are improving
- It's just a minor issue
- I happened long ago; forget it
- He won't understand
- I am not guilty
- The other person was mostly wrong
- I'll do it later
- No one is perfect
- Both are equally wrong

2

Rule 2: Admit the pain and Acknowledge the hurt



Acknowledge the hurt and pain; don't deny or bury it.



Confront the issue honestly and share the pain.



Say "I'm sorry" with genuine understanding of the hurt.



Acknowledge the wrong for what it was.



Tell others they have hurt us; don't ignore it.



Confrontation (sometimes with witness) is necessary for true forgiveness and restored relationship.

3

Rule 3: Report the pain of hurt; not anger or revenge



Hurt (pain) comes first.



Then anger (bitterness) rises.



If unexpressed, it can lead to a desire for revenge.



Report and express the pain early.



Forgiveness begins when we honestly communicate our hurt.

4

Rule 4: Disregard unintentional and minor hurts



- We need not confront others over every little difference, annoyance or slight. Love allows for personal differences.
- Love covers multitude of sins. **Rom 10:12**
- Ignore offenses that people commit unknowingly or unintentionally against us. **Lk 23:34**
- Not every rub and offense should be raised. Confront only when it keeps recurring and love cannot overlook.
- There are both moral offenses and moral annoyances. The latter may be irritating but not have moral implications.

TENSION (Quiz)

If you answered "yes" even to one of the questions in the quiz, you may well be experiencing a build up of tension.

- ☐ Do little things about others irritate me?
- ☐ Do I easily feel offended?
- ☐ Do I keep recalling past hurts?
- ☐ Do I find it hard to let go?
- ☐ Do I react quickly in anger?

5

Rule 5: Offer apology and grow into maturity



A sincere apology has five elements: "SORRY"

- S** Soon: The earlier we apologise, the better.
- O** Offer: We must want to apologise.
- R** Regret: We wish we hadn't and we won't in the future.
- R** Restitution: Do the best we can to restore the situation.
- Y** Yourself: The person who made the mess must clear it up.

- Apology is an act of strength and builds maturity.
- It tells the other person about our feelings, attitudes and intentions.
- Our words of apology should be simple, specific and brief.
- It helps the other person, but our benefit is even greater – it frees us from guilt and shame and from fear of retaliation.

6

Rule 6: Notice that forgiveness is not a feeling but a duty



- Forgiveness is a duty, a command, a commitment.
- We can grant forgiveness against our feelings.
- We can love and be angry at the same time.
- Forgiveness is a choice – a decision to repent and a decision to forgive.
- Joseph chose to forgive in spite of his feelings of anger, grief or sorrow.

- Sometimes we can forgive with the will, but not with emotions: "I'll forgive you but I'm going to stay out of your way."
- When we don't feel like forgiving, pray honestly: "Lord, I don't want to forgive him – not after all he has done to me."
- The Lord will say, "Do you want to want to forgive him?" "Yes, Lord, because you want me to, I want to want to." God accepts it.



Honest acknowledgment, open communication and timely expression of hurt are the keys that lead the way to true forgiveness and restored relationships.



Worksheet 5 (On Practising forgiveness)

GROUP BUILDING

Find the alternatives to the following situations and share your answers with your group

Situation	Conflict	Alternatives
Families	Fight	
Marriage	Divorce	
Community	Factions	
Society	Classes	
Nations	Enmity	
Church	Denominations	

THOUGHT PROVOKERS

- a) Which is correct: we don't forgive, because we can't or we won't / don't want to?
- b) Who should speak first, after a misunderstanding: The one wronged or the Wrong doer?

FORGIVENESS VOCABULARY

Take a look at the following words of a person who believe in not forgiving. How would you rewrite these unforgiving words with peacemaking ones in forgiveness?

- a) It's too hard to forgive you
- b) You don't deserve an apology
- c) I'll never be the same
- d) I am not sorry
- e) It won't work
- f) I don't need you

FORGIVENESS SYMBOLS

Some signs of forgiveness and peace are more effective than others. Can you think of others; which do you consider very effective - Rank your choice 1,2 and 3

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| ☐ A gift | ☐ A letter | ☐ Playing a game together |
| ☐ A smile | ☐ A favour | ☐ Taking meals together |
| ☐ A hug | ☐ A pat | ☐ Watching a show together |

LIFE APPLICATION

What would you do (Mark H for the hardest, E for the easiest). When a person has hurt me, I will:

- Look for ways to show kindness to that person
- Talk to that person and express my hurt feelings
- Forgive that person without any preconditions
- Drop the issue if it is minor or unintentional hurt
- Will not brood over the offense or tell others
- Draw that person closer than ever it was before

Chapter 5: Steps in practicing forgiveness

AIMS OF THE SESSION

- To become aware of specific steps to forgiving
- To understand the importance of taking decision to forgive
- To take initiative for communicating with the person who hurt us
- To examine and set right our relationship
- To experience and celebrate the joy of forgiveness
- To find way and means of not remembering or recalling the offense

Alternatives to conflict (Group Building) (Worksheet Item 1)

Find the alternatives to the following situations and share your answers with your group

Situation	Conflict	Alternatives
Families	Fight	Harmony, Peace
Marriage	Divorce	Happy family, Reunion
Community	Factions	Unity, Oneness, Identity
Society	Classes	Brotherhood, Solidarity
Nations	Enmity	Alliance, Coalition
Church	Denominations	One Body, Integration, Ecumenism

STEPS TO FORGIVING

It is necessary to suggest list of specific steps to heal a broken relationship. For easy remembrance, here is a five step 'UNITE' programme, an Acronym, with each step starting with the letter U - N - I - T - E. The same may be put in another form, with each step starting with the letter "R"

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 U nilaterally decide to forgive | - Resolve to forgive |
| 2 N ormalise communication | - Restore Communication |
| 3 I nitiate to renew relationship | - Rebuild / Reestablish new relationship |
| 4 T ogether celebrate | - Rejoice and celebrate |
| 5 E ngage not in remembering the hurt | - Refrain from remembering the hurt |

Step 1: Resolve/ Decide to forgive

Thought Provokers

- a) Which is correct: We don't forgive, because we can't or we won't (don't want to)?
- b) Who should speak first, after a misunderstanding: the one who wronged or The wrong-doer?

In 5:6 Jesus asks the invalid at the pool of Bethesda, a challenging question: "Wilt thou be made whole?" That is, "Do you really want to be healed" or "Would you pay the price for your coveted goals?" Do you want to be healed or do you want to talk about your problem? Do you want to use your problems to get sympathy from others? The lame man blamed others and would not look deep within his heart to find out whether he really wanted to be healed. We see here Jesus directing the attention to the future rather than the past. When attention is focused on the future, then there is never a situation which cannot be helped in some way.

If we pondered over Jesus' questions, many of us would be forced to answer "No". We do not want to be healed for we are not willing to pay the price. When our envy gives way to sympathy and our resentment to love - then reconciliation is possible.

Forgiving is a conscious decision whether one feels like it or not. At this point, we are not forgiving, because we don't even want to forgive. We need not know how we are going to forgive. We need not determine a precise strategy or even see its actual possibility. All we need to do is, decide to forgive. It helps. It is the first step in the right direction.

If this decision is postponed, until the last instalment is collected, complete with bitter interests, then it is pure vengeance. If we hold back forgiveness, until the offender deserves, then it is not forgiveness. Timing is important; postponement can be deadly. The longer the infection is permitted, to build up, the greater the difficulty it is to get rid of.

So we begin where we can begin. That is, we must first decide that we are willing to want to apologise or forgive. Although this is a small step, it is probably the most difficult to make. It is an essential step because it is a deliberate act of the will, to be obedient to God's command. When forgiving seems impossible, we should remember that God will help us and that He is satisfied when we start wherever we are.

Billy Graham through whose ministry millions have come to know the promise of forgiveness calls his radio programme "The Hour of Decision" and his magazine is

called "Decision". Lk 15:18 When the prodigal son said "I will arise and go to my father ...", it was a decision. Forgiving is unilateral and not reciprocal The important thing is that you are responsible for you and I am responsible for me.

Step 2: Restore Communication

a) Desire for dialogue:

Communication binds persons together. That is why in any difficulty between individuals, communication suffers. Hence in restoring relationships, we have to begin at the point of communication. Forgiving calls for good communication, the desire for dialogue

Illustration: A stubborn old farmer was ploughing his field. A neighbour who was watching as he tried to guide the mule, said, "You could save yourself a lot of energy by saying "Gee and Haw", instead of jerking on the reins. The old farmer mopped his brow and replied, "Yep, I know; but this here mule kicked me six years back and I ain't speak to him since." How foolish?

b) Take the initiative:

If I am aware of a problem, it is always my responsibility to get it straightened out. Whether I am guilty or innocent, makes no difference. A totally innocent part is very rare. Any way take the initiative. We need not confess any imaginary hurting. However, (Mt 18:15, Lk 17:3) Jesus commanded us to go and confront the individual with the problem existing between us.

Illustration: Two generals were at loggerheads over a question of precedence - which of them should salute first. They were equal in seniority, both of the same age; both in the same rank. The Marshall gave his answer when they approached him - "the one who is more polite." So, then who is to make the first step, make the first gesture, the first at reconciliation - the one who is most Christian.

c) Rehearse what you are going to say:

Carefully think through the words we are going to use in confronting, for they must reflect proper attitude and insight. Asking forgiveness is an emotionally charged embarrassing and often totally new experience. The Prodigal son when he came to his senses decided upon a wise course of action. He imagined what would happen when he reached home. He thought it through and then he rehearsed "I will get up and go to my father and say ..." Lk 15:17-19 Rehearsing the conversation like he prodigal son has its own benefits. Practicing what we are going to say, will make it

easier to actually say it; as we practice, we will learn a lot about ourselves, our behaviour and about the other person. And our attitude may begin to change.

d) Be explicit (while seeking forgiveness):

We must make some kind of statements about the offense for which we are seeking forgiveness or offering an apology:

- The words must reflect full repentance and sincere humility
- Avoid proud or wrong approach (I'm sorry, but it wasn't my fault, or I was wrong, but so were you too or if I've been wrong, please forgive me)
- Be as brief as possible; the more we talk, the greater is the danger of saying the wrong thing
- Pinpoint what you are seeking forgiveness for, be specific; to generalize wrongdoing only suggests you are unwilling to acknowledge wrongdoing; deal with the basic problem without confusing the issue (Say: I realise I've been wrong in I'm sorry, I apologize for Will you please forgive me for)
- At the same time, avoid shameful details; Pg 51 - David does not discuss the details, the same is the case with the Prodigal son.

e) Do it with sensitivity (while offering or granting forgiveness)

- There is no need to tell the offender that we are forgiving; for it will make him uncomfortable, in some way perhaps embarrassed, angry and ashamed
- Common sense and love dictate that we do not talk if it would hurt the other person, more than it would benefit. If it will aggravate an already difficult situation avoid it
- If it will help, then do it; it may be helpful to do so in some situation and not helpful in others.

f) Select proper time and place:

If at all possible, see the individual in person in a place where there will be no interruption and at a time convenient for him - of minimal stress for the person you confront. He should be in the proper mood / temper and alone. To delay is dangerous ... all the more difficult. Mt 18:15

g) Listen:

Listening in communication is crucial. Listen to what the other person has to say. We may gain greater insights into the event and to the other person's behaviour. They often express feelings, opinion and judgments that they would otherwise never have made known. Much of this is good, for truth surfaces at those times.

h) Use a third party:

Among the very first words sent from the risen Christ to the woman at the grave were (Mk 16:7) “Go and tell the disciples and Peter” Jesus was still talking to Peter and disciples after the embarrassing betrayal and forsaking. Usually the only solution is for some outsider to assist in reestablishing communication.

i) Closing:

If it seems appropriate, we might offer a prayer with the other person. We can pray rejoicing that through God's mercy, it is possible to forgive and then pray asking that the wounds of broken relationships be healed.

Vocabulary of forgiveness (Exercise) (Worksheet Item 3)

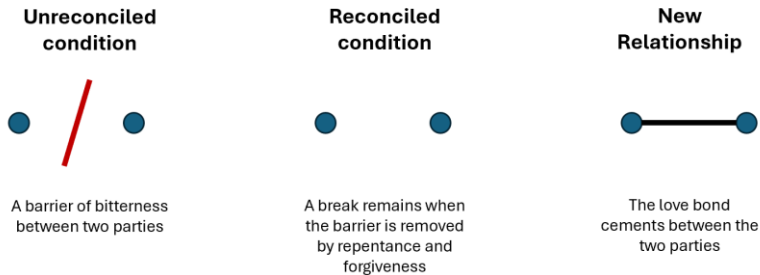
Unforgiving words	Peace-making words
It is too hard for me to forgive you	Let me try my best
You don't deserve my apology	I didn't mean to hurt you
It'll never be the same	Let us make up
I am not sorry or I don't care	I am really sorry
It won't work	Let's start all over again
I don't need you	Let's be friends again

Step 3: Rebuilt/ Reestablish new relationship

Look at the figure.

This is unreconciled situation due to the hurt. A barrier of bitterness between the parties exists. In the figure 2, the reconciled condition shows that barrier is removed by repentance/ apology and forgiveness. But the break still remains. The figure 3 shows the new relationship, with a bond between the parties. Fellowship and unity are brought by bridging the gap.

Once forgiveness is granted, awkwardness may occur at subsequent meetings, particularly if they occur infrequently or after significant lapse of time or only by chance. This awkwardness may be misinterpreted as coldness by either party. The answer to this problem lies in the steps taken to establish a new relationship. Misunderstandings like this can be avoided by pursuing reconciliation to the end, by determining to maintain regular contacts in which even communication and joint work on the new relationship leads beyond awkwardness to a true friendship, understanding and brotherly love.



One of the effective ways is for the forgiving person or the forgiven offender, to seek help from each other. Also we must quit hurting the other person. Forgiving is the opposite of retaliation and we can't do both.

Illustration: Two persons working as cleaners in a factory were constantly at one another's throat. It became a grave problem in the factory. The manager hit upon an idea. He put them to washing windows - one on one side and the other on the opposite side. Before long, the factory people were laughing so much so that the two men realised how ridiculous they had been and forgave one another.

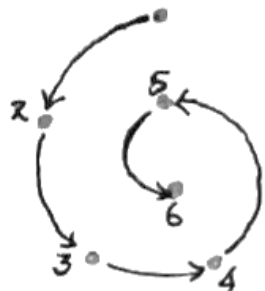
Reconciliation is a change of relationship between two parties - God and man or man and man. It involves three elements:

1. Confession of sin or hurt by the offending party
2. Forgiveness by the offended party
3. Establishment of new relationship between the two

Mt 3:8, Lk 3:8 When John the Baptist says "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" or "worthy of repentance", it always involves change of relationships. It not only leads to abandonment of the old ways (putting off), but also to the establishment of new relationship (putting on). The most evident fruit is the desire to and willingness to build new relationship. It takes time for the fruit to grow.

The process may be diagrammed as shown below:

1. Hurt
2. Love
3. Repentance
4. Forgiveness
5. Not remembering
6. New relationship



If a new relationship based on biblical change and help is not established, then it is likely that one or more of the parties will revert to his old ways again. If so, again an unreconciled condition will develop. The answer to this problem lies in the steps taken to establish a new relationship between the offender and the offended once forgiveness has been granted.

Step 4: Rejoice and Celebrate

The depth of forgiveness is measured not by words, but actions of reconciliation. So we must find a way to mark the event of forgiveness, to honour the effort, to remember the grace and to commemorate peace. Celebrations always followed forgiveness.

- Lk 15:22,24 The father of the prodigal son celebrates the reconciliation with gifts, meals and merry making
- Gen 33:4,9,14 Esau ran to meet Jacob, embraced him, kissed him, wept together and gave away gifts
- Gen 45:15,21-23 Joseph kissed all his brethren and wept upon them; and gave each man changes of raiment
- Lk 15:8-10,19:5,7 Throughout the Gospels, we see many of the parties which Jesus attended - after the conversion of Levi, at the home of Simon the Pharisee, at the home of Zacchaeus and others - many of these parties have something in common - they are all celebrations of conversion of a sinner or during the party Jesus forgave somebody's sin. "There is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner." Forgiveness is a joyous event. That joy should be shared
- Lk 15:23 In the parable of the Prodigal son, the father wounded by the departure of the younger son is healed by the forgiveness that he generously extends to his chastened and repentant son (whereas in the elder son his anger and bitterness effectively block off the healing process) Further we see that the forgiveness called for the fatted calf of rejoicing.
- Jn 21:12,13 After resurrection, on the shores of Galilee, after a fruitless (fishless) night, Jesus beckons the disciples to a breakfast and he cooked for them. It was forgiveness in word and deed. It was a magnificent picture of a healed relationship

Christ wants us to remember that He forgave. We Christians remember it by the symbol called communion. It reminds us that He forgave us. Giving and receiving forgiveness makes a Christian brotherhood.

The sign of peace that we are asked to give at the Holy communion is a symbolic gesture to indicate that we want to extend our healing forgiveness to others and are willing to accept the healing that others are willing to apply to our faults.

We all need signs of forgiveness. We yearn for some word or gesture to comfort and reassure us that we are pardoned. God has given us a sign of forgiveness in the words of the priest - as well as by his touch.

Forgiveness symbols (Listing) (Worksheet Item 4)

Some signs are more effective communicators than others. Do you really need words to express forgiveness? Which do you consider the most effective? Which do you use? Can you think of other gestures? Remember that forgiveness can be without words also, for it is a joyous event.

We all need signs of forgiveness by celebrations, because:

- It helps to remove the awkwardness which generally develops after reconciliation
- It helps to forget the hurt
- It reassures us that we are pardoned
- It shows that friendship is restored
- We are freed from our shame and guilt

Step 5: Refrain from remembering the incident/ hurt

Refuse to remember the incident or the hurt. Remove the obstacles to forget the incident or the hurt. Agreeing to forgive but not forget - is one of the most regrettable mistakes one can make. Limited forgiveness is like conditional love - a poor substitute for the genuine item. "I will forgive, but I can't forget" is another way of saying "I will not forgive." It is no forgiveness at all.

When one has forgiven another, it however does not mean that everyone must immediately forget the past. There is no such commandment in the Scriptures. At the same time, let us understand the subtle difference between "Forgetting" and "Not remembering." How can we forget what we want or attempt to forget? Many people take on themselves the impossible goal of forgetting. And then, mistakenly believing that they have not forgotten, and consequently not forgiven, feel guilty.

The test of whether or not we have forgiven someone is not in whether or not we remember the incident, or even in whether or not there is some pain connected with the memory. Those leftover effects are common. The proof of forgiving lies in our attitude and action. In summary, we don't forget. But miracle of miracles, it no longer matters that we have not forgotten. We are no longer controlled by the hurt.

Look at the paradox: If we could forget it, then we wouldn't need to forgive it. Also forgetting forgets the person. In dismissing the wrong deed, we dismiss that person too. the more we try to forget, the better we remember.

Illustration: A famous story is told of a bishop of a church. A young nun in his diocese claimed to have had a vision of Jesus. According to the custom, she was called to appear before the Bishop. "Sister, did you speak with him?" asked the bishop "Yes, I did" said the nun. After some more talk, he decided on a test for any real encounter with Jesus. "All right, if you ever have another vision of our Lord, would you ask him this question: What was the bishop's primary sin, before he became a bishop?" - for he knew that only God and his confessor would know the same. I'd like you to come and tell me, what Jesus says?

A few months later, the nun made an appointment with the bishop. He asked her, "Sister, did you see our Lord again?" - "Yes, Bishop, I did." The bishop's expression became serious with just a trace of apprehension. "Did you ask him, what was the bishop's primary sin, before he became a bishop?" - "Yes, sir, I did ask." Hesitantly the bishop asked her, "What did Jesus reply?" - The young woman looks up the corner of the room, bringing to her mind her Lord's face. Then she replied to the bishop, "My Lord said, He doesn't remember."

God's forgiveness is so complete that it is as if we had never sinned before. So he can forgive us again, because after forgiveness, each sin is a new one. Ps 25:7, 79:8 David also prayed "Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgression." He did not pray "Forget my iniquities."

Instead of forgetting, let us cease remembering; no constant reviewing; no rehashing the old hurt. the past is past; nothing can alter the facts; what has happened has happened for ever; there is no use recalling the hurt. But the meaning can be changed - and that is forgiveness. Forget the hurt and remember the joy of reuniting. Why remember the pain, when there is much more beautiful and joyous feeling in the gift of new relationship. But then, how do we forget? Under proper condition, forgetting will take place in time.

Jn 5:8 Jesus commanded the paralytic, “Rise, take up thy bed and walk” “Take up thy bed” in forgiving means ‘remove the barriers’ - that is, to eliminate the temptation to fall back on the old hurt.

One of the improper conditions is brooding over the offense in self-pity. Do not replay the videotape; don't rewind it for another look; don't put it in slow motion. As we consciously and prayerfully avoid such practices, we will discover that increasingly it becomes possible to forget. Indeed, there is no other way to forget it. Granting forgiveness then does not produce instant forgetting; but rather entails the promise to adopt attitudes and practices that will lead to forgetting. So then forget the past. Remember the lesson gained and forget the ugliness of the harsh words or unpleasant encounters if you want to really understand forgiving.

Some people have thought about an old grievance so much, that it is necessary for them to use a systematic method to retrain their thought patterns. Here is a method that is useful in such situations. When the unwanted thought intrudes, say the word ‘STOP.’ We may say it either loud or to ourselves, but we must say it with authority and then turn our thinking to something else - even something meaningless like counting or reciting the alphabet. Or make the exercise more challenging by counting backward from 490 by 7's or by reciting the alphabet backwards. Better yet, recite a Scripture verse, or pray with thanksgiving or count your blessings. Any of these activities will displace the unwanted thought with something neutral or positive

PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love
For ... It is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life*

Life application & Conclusion (Worksheet Item 5)

- a) In applying the principles and taking various steps in forgiving, learnt so far, what would be hard and what would be easy?
- b) Can you think of some places in your own life, where you can take first step and initiate the process of forgiveness?

STEPS TO FORGIVING

The five steps form the acronym **UNITE**.

U



1. UNILATERALLY DECIDE TO FORGIVE

– Resolve to forgive

- Forgiving is a conscious decision, whether you feel like it or not.
- Decide to forgive; you don't need to know how or see the possibility.
- Do it now—don't postpone until the offender deserves.
- It is the first step in the right direction.
- It is an act of obedience to God's command.
- Forgiving is unilateral and not reciprocal; you are responsible for you and I am responsible for me.

N



2. NORMALISE COMMUNICATION

– Restore Communication

- Desire dialogue; communication binds persons together.
- Take the initiative to address the problem (Mt 18:15, Lk 17:3).
- Rehearse what you are going to say.
- Be explicit, sincere and specific while seeking forgiveness.
- Do it with sensitivity and love while offering or granting forgiveness.

I



3. INITIATE TO RENEW RELATIONSHIP

– Rebuild / Reestablish
new relationship

- Begin with the right words, at the right time, under the right conditions.
- Build up mutual trust and confidence.
- Accept each other as you are.
- Forgiveness is a start for rebuilding the relationship, not the end.

T



4. TOGETHER CELEBRATE

– Rejoice and celebrate

- Celebration strengthens the restored relationship.
- Celebrate the joy of forgiveness and reconciliation together.
- Rejoice in the new beginning and God's grace.
- It deepens unity, gratitude and mutual encouragement.

E



5. ENGAGE NOT IN REMEMBERING THE HURT

– Refrain from
remembering the hurt

- Do not replay the past or rewind it for another look.
- Do not put it in slow motion or instant replay.
- As we consciously and prayerfully avoid such practices, we will discover that increasingly it becomes possible to forget.
- With God's help, we can move forward in freedom and peace.

Worksheet 6 (On Sources of strength for forgiving)

1 GROUP BUILDING

Indicate your fitness for each area, somewhere on the line. The midpoint (N) would be Normal and (B) on one end is 'bad enough' and (G) on the other end is feeling great

	B	N	G
Physical			
Mental			
Emotional			
Behavioural			
Relational			
Spiritual			

2 PERSONAL INVENTORY

- a) From my experience, conflict turns into creative change when: (Tick two items)
- ☐ One side gives in
 - ☐ Someone breaks the stalemate
 - ☐ Someone says 'I'm sorry'
 - ☐ Both cool down
 - ☐ Both try to listen to the other
 - ☐ Both compromise
- b) In conflict, my stance is (tick one item)
- ☐ Defensive
 - ☐ Awkward
 - ☐ Compromising
 - ☐ Cautious
 - ☐ Cool
 - ☐ Aggressive
 - ☐ Back off
 - ☐ Constructive
 - ☐ Open
 - ☐ Hot

3 REFLECTION

- a) When I need strength for hard decisions in my life, I usually seek through:
- ☐ Prayer
 - ☐ Scripture

- ☐ Neighbour
- ☐ My small group
- ☐ Priest
- ☐ Communion
- ☐ No one
- ☐ My husband/wife
- b) How would you describe the Holy Spirit's activity in your life:
 - ☐ Grim
 - ☐ Confused
 - ☐ Growing
 - ☐ Exciting
 - ☐ Great
 - ☐ Struggling
 - ☐ Don't know
 - ☐ Up & down
 - ☐ A new beginning

4 LIFE APPLICATION

There are many ways of saying “I love you”, in order to overcoming communication problems in families. What would you like to do within two days (Mark D), within a week (Mark W) and within a month (Mark M)

- ☐ To surprise them with flowers/gifts/nice things
- ☐ To be more affectionate
- ☐ To say “I love you” in words to them more often
- ☐ To forgive more freely/frequently
- ☐ To remember birthdays and special occasions
- ☐ To spend more time with each other
- ☐ To do special work around the house and help
- ☐ To correspond at regular intervals

Chapter 6: Sources of strength for forgiving

AIMS OF THE SESSION

- To discover the centrality of CHRIST as the main source of strength for forgiving
- To become aware of the role of Holy Spirit and Holy Scriptures in forgiving
- To recognise the importance of Repentance and Imaging Prayer in forgiving
- To develop the forgiving attitude through inspiration from testimonies and witnesses
- To recognise various other sources which aid and motivate us toward forgiveness

Fitness Indication (Group Building) (Worksheet Item 1)

The areas covered are physical, mental, emotional, behavioural, relational and spiritual

Forgiveness does not come easily and naturally

Illustration: A teacher had narrated the parable of the prodigal son to the boys of his elementary class four and then had asked them to write out a summary. One of them wrote as follows: "As the prodigal son drew near the house, the father picked his thick walking stick and ran to meet him. On the way he met the elder son, the good one, who asked him where he was going in such a hurry with that tool. "That wretched brother of yours has returned; after what he has done, he deserves a good thrashing" the father said. "Do you want me to help you Dad," asked the elder brother. "Certainly" replied the father. And in this way the two of them gave the prodigal son a good beating. At last the father called a servant and asked him to kill the fattest calf and to prepare a big feast; because he had finally satisfied his desire to punish the son who had disgraced him so badly."

This is not a flight of fancy nor an inattentive boy. This is a typical case of an intellectual rejection, or of a distorted perception. His mind is unable to accept the grace of gospel. The father who forgives is absurd, the son who repented cannot be relied upon and the other son has reason to complain. Without being aware of it, he has readjusted the final scene, giving it an ending that was more 'normal' and comfortable to the critical justice of a society that is forgetting the sense of forgiveness, that does not believe in the repentance of others, that has substituted pardoning grace with revenge.

Lk 15:28-30 More often we are like the elder son. Not only do we find it difficult to forgive, but we are annoyed by those who forgive. We would almost want to stop them. This is a very harmful attitude. We should remember that we too have made many mistakes and have been forgiven each time.

Forgiveness is costly. It is an agony of submission. It is our willingness to bear the pain of another's misdeeds. Hence it needs a lot of strength and motivation. Each time we forgive, we are participating symbolically in the all-inclusive suffering of Christ.

With Christ as our main source, here is a list of sources for spiritual strengthening to heal broken relationships.

C ... Christ

H ... Holy Spirit and Holy Scriptures

R ... Repentance and Confession

I ... Intercessory and Imaging Prayers

S ... Sacrament of Communion and Baptismal vows

T ... Testimonies and Witnesses

Source 1: Christ, the foremost source

No one has ever suffered emotional insult and injury more than Jesus Christ - rejected, lied against, turned against by people he counted on, betrayed by close friends, was called a blasphemer, ridiculed, laughed at, scorned and terrible physical sufferings inflicted upon - but never once did Jesus react in word or deed to strike back or inflict injury. He was always a responder, not a reactor. He forgave unconditionally. No one ever lived like Jesus. Jesus is our perfect example of and source of strength on how to forgive and overcome evil with good.

- 1 Pet 2:23 When he was insulted He offered no insult in return. When he suffered, he made no threats of revenge. He simply committed his cause to the one who judges fairly.
- Lk 5:20,21 Jesus readily forgives regardless of the cost. He would forgive sins without being asked, even when the act of forgiving would result in charges of blasphemy which was punishable by stoning.
- Jn 8:10,11 His hunger for forgiveness made him overlook all danger to himself - whether from angry men ready to cast stones at an adulteress or from apostles scandalised because he spoke alone to a loose and hated Samaritan woman

- Lk 23:43 Christ's readiness to forgive impelled him to forgive unconditionally the thief on the cross - without any condition of proving his love - made no qualifications such as I'll forgive you if you change or apologise or give up drinking.
- Mk 10:21 Even when change does not take place, Christ still focuses on the positive and loves - the rich young ruler

Managing Conflict (Personal Inventory) (Worksheet Item 2)

- a) Conflict turning into creative change
- b) My stand during conflict

Source 2: Holy Spirit and Holy Scriptures

The greatest counselor and source of strength is the Holy Spirit - with which we need to make no appointment. He is ready all the time.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what your real problem is, and how you need to pray. Sometimes the Holy Spirit uses a temporary assistant, in the form of a human counselor who can help us to perceive what the real problem is. Sometimes the Spirit is able to do this through God's word.

Pour in the truth of God's word. Read it, meditate upon it, turn it over in your soul and press it down. As you begin to saturate your soul with this Truth, the bitterness begins to flow out. Focus on God's forgiveness. Think of how vast, how extensive, His mercy has been extended towards us. Read relevant passages. Ps 103:2-5, 10-12 Meditate on them. Personalise these words by substituting me and my for us and ours. Ponder the depth of God's mercy. The extent to which we can envision God's forgiveness of us, to that same measure, we will be given the capacity to forgive others.

Lk 24:13-35 The two men on the road to Emmaus feel angry toward the chief priests and leaders for putting the Messiah to death; towards the prophets for misleading the disciples. They feel guilty and downcast about being foolish men. Jesus explains the scriptures to them and puts them in touch with a forgiving Christ. They invite him to their meals. As they meet the unconditional forgiveness of Christ, they no longer have the downcast faces but forgiving hearts that burn within them. With a healed memory they joyfully return to Jerusalem.

Read and think about Scriptures. Read Mt 5:23,24 when you are the offender. Read Mt 18:21-34 when you are the offended. As we're filled with wholesome new thoughts, the unhealthy ones are crowded out. Mental and emotional renewal takes place.

Source 3: Repentance, Restitution and Confession

Forgiveness includes, requires and follows repentance. Where there is no repentance, there is no true forgiveness. When forgiveness forgoes repentance, don't trust it. Repentance is sorrow converted into action. Right actions for the future are the only true apologies for wrong actions in the past.

James 5:16 "Confess your sins to one another." Because only in the humiliation of honest confession can we be freed from guilt. When we stand before our brother and bring our sin out into the light, then sin dies. Refusal to confess is actually walking in darkness, living a lie. To pretend peace and perfection, where in reality, there is hidden guilt and secret sin, is the height of hypocrisy.

Confession should be as public as possible as the commission of the hurting act. Only those directly involved should be told in our confession. Sin should not be published for general public consumption and speculation. Confession should be shared where it is a help to another, not a hurt or a hindrance. It should not be so intimate, so revealing, so painful that it will wound or scar the person to whom it is confessed.

Gen 42:21-23, 44:32-34 The acknowledgment by brothers of Joseph of their guilt in respect to himself revealed that his brothers were repentant. This made him tenderer toward them. Judah confesses that they have no defence and that they are guilty. Judah also does a noble thing to be surety for Benjamin. Remember that it was Judah's plot to sell Joseph into slavery (Gen 37:26)

Lk 15:17-19 It is important that we understand the role of the Prodigal son; to be aware of one's mistakes; to endure it above all as a wrong done to the whole community; to be humble enough to ask pardon; to be ready to take the last place as he one that suits as best, to be a servant without feeling humiliated.

Repentance, What it is not: It is not remorse, not a process of shaming, not a self destruction by means of lowered self-esteem. It is not penance, not a process of grieving for sufficient length of time until one deserves or earns acceptance.

Repentance, What it is: Repentance is a turning - a turning from and a turning to. In repenting one turns from what was, without denying or ignoring what has been,

and one turns to what can be, by choosing new ways of being and behaving. The past is accepted or owned. Evading or avoiding blocks the growth. Having owned the past, one is free to choose new alternatives for the future. Thus repentance is pain turned creative, hurt that moves towards healing.

Repentance Vs Forgiveness - a paradox: Two contrasting positions on the nature of genuine forgiving focus on the issue of repentance.

- Position 1: Forgiveness precedes repentance (or repentance follows forgiveness). It sees true repentance as an emotion arising from the experience of forgiveness. When one knows that he has been loved, accepted, forgiven, then he is free to respond repentantly when one feels the reality of loving, acceptant forgiveness, then the motivation to repent springs up within.
Thus forgiveness comes first. It is the base, the ground out of which authentic repenting rises. Repentance is motivated by the experience of forgiveness - and not the other way around. This is unconditional forgiveness, with no questions asked, no demands imposed, no repentance required, no revenge attempted.
- Position 2: Repentance precedes forgiveness (or forgiveness follows repentance) When repentance is overlooked, ignored, bypassed or postponed, the appropriate response is love, not forgiveness. Love chooses to see the other person as a valued person once more in spite of the wrongdoing. Love restores the equal regard for the other person as a person of worth. This is step one. Repentance is the second. Then follows the negotiations of trust until right relationships are once more achieved, when forgiveness becomes a reality.

Is this merely a chicken and egg riddle? What does it matter which comes first as long as both do occur. The fact is - repentance is the central task of forgiving and being forgiven. Where there is no repentance, there is no true forgiveness. Repentance is indispensable - for forgiveness includes, requires, follows repentance.

The prodigal in Luke 15, who knows himself to be lost, is accepted again by the father. That is to say, the one who is ready to repent finds forgiveness. Penitence and forgiveness are so closely tied that one can reverse the principle; only he who is forgiven finds his way to penitence. Only he who is penitent receives the kingdom of heaven, and only because the kingdom of heaven has come near is there repentance.

The woman in Luke 7, shows so much love because she has known such great forgiveness. In this account, Jesus' comment in verse 48, "Your sins are forgiven" simply reaffirms a fact that has already been shown by the woman's love. She has not earned her forgiveness through the repentance of extravagant love; because she has been forgiven, she is able to repent by showing such love.

These stories and the parable of the Unforgiving servant (Mt 18:23-35) communicate the same reality. Those who are forgiven by God must be transformed by that forgiveness into people who embody forgiveness and repentance throughout their lives. God's forgiveness should occasion repentance, a turning that marks people's new life with and in Christ and results in their showing love to others.

Jesus' words are clear in Lk 17:3,4. Note the sequence of events: Pain ~ Love ~ Confrontation ~ Repentance ~ Forgiveness ~ Renewed love ~ in this order

1. There is a situation of wrongdoing
2. The wrongdoer is still perceived as a brother
3. He is confronted (rebuked)
4. If he then repents
5. Forgive him
6. Even when there is repetition of the offense

Restitution: Ex 22:1-12, Mt 5:23,24, Lk 17:3 The repentant offender takes the responsibility for the offense and takes appropriate corrective action. This action involves more than offering an apology. It requires confessing the wrongdoing and making restitution if the offended person suffered property damage or other loss (Lk19:8)

Source 4: Intercessory and imaging prayer

Forgiveness is so difficult that we simply cannot do it alone. Prayer is necessary. It assuredly requires the Grace of God. When God's power and love are allowed to act as a solvent, even the deepest bitterness can be washed away. Prayer can do very much to loosen upon our own unyielding attitude and may do the same thing for the other person.

(Even when we find a particular situation so intransigent that we cannot imagine forgiveness, must less reconciliation, we can nonetheless engage in prayers of forgiveness and healing) Such prayers are enjoined on Christians in the Lord's Prayer and in several other New Testament passages (Mt 5:44, James 5:16, Col 3:13-17) It is in this context that a person harbouring bitterness against another

might be asked, "Can you pray for that person?" Doing so might begin to create a thaw not only in the interaction but also in our own hearts.

Further we need to recognise the centrality of prayers of intercession offered by others in the community, even when we feel unable to proceed further along the path of forgiveness and reconciliation. There is a great ministry here which we can perform for one another. Often it is morally impossible for me to forgive someone who has harmed me; I may want to forgive but somehow find it beyond my powers. The support of my brothers and sisters in Christ, forgiving for me, may well be the means by which eventually I too can learn to forgive. The converse is equally true; perhaps when we feel so guilty so ashamed that we cannot claim our own forgiveness. The prayerful support of brothers and sisters in Christ accepting forgiveness for us, may well be means by which eventually we, too, can learn to be forgiven.

Mt 5:44, Lk 6:27,28 Jesus said "Love your enemies, pray for them." Christ's way is not always the easy way; but it is certainly the best way. Pray for them to be healed so that they will feel secure and won't need to put others down. It is said that you can never hate anyone for whom you pray. Hate, disgust, and dislike make praying difficult. But our Christian faith tells us that we need to talk to God our Father, about everything, even about our fragile interpersonal relationships - "Father, I am angry, God forgive me, change me, you're my forgiving, loving Savior who can give me a loving spirit for that person."

The best way to forgive is through prayer - for it protects the person we're forgiving from embarrassment of seeing his fault displayed in front of him. Our prayer life can determine the ease and depth at which we forgive.

In prayer the spirit helps us to be Christlike (Mt 18:21, Mk 11:25, Lk 23:39) and search for the positive qualities in the person who has hurt us. Our prayer needs more than thoughts. It needs imaging and actualisation. Some ideas are:

By using your own imagination, visualise both you and the other person standing side by side at the foot of the cross and see how Jesus loves us both equally and infinitely. See the Lord forgiving the other person, healing us of the hurt that we experienced and to unite ourselves with His forgiving love, letting His infinite love and forgiveness flow through both of us.

Imagine yourself looking directly at that person as you say: "... (name)... through Jesus, I forgive you ... I will no longer hold this against you; Jesus has healed me; I

set you free and I set myself free." This will be difficult and painful, but healing will follow.

Look at a picture of Jesus looking at; look at Him with love until you sense what He wants to say. Ask Jesus when He felt like you or when He met someone like you. Listen how Jesus responds - what He seems to say in response to what you have told him

Source 5: Sacrament of Communion and Baptismal Vows

The Eucharist is an eschatological meal that recalls the past, anticipates the future, and sustains us in the present. It recalls the past of Jesus' table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, enacting the forgiveness of communion in concrete situations and lives, even as it also anticipates the messianic banquet in God's Kingdom, to which all are invited and in which no one will be hungry.

At the Last Supper, in the Upper Room, Jesus is completely willing to be hurt again and again, by Judas and the disciples. The closer we get to the communion time, we must focus on our need to be forgiven and to forgive. The practice of exchanging a kiss of peace in the context of the eucharistic celebration emerged as a sign of forgiveness and reconciliation. It would be a sign that Christians had ongoing practices of discerning the body so that they could genuinely celebrate the eucharistic feast as forgiven and forgiving people. This discernment is an ongoing requirement of the Church's life.

How do we know when we may be partaking "impenitently"? Paul would say we do so when we fail to "discern the body". Paul seems to be suggesting that we eat impenitently if we fail to engage in penitential judgment about the state of our common life. That is, we must recognise and transform the state of our lives in and through the community - repenting of the divisions and the material practices that lead to those divisions.

Illustration: The Palestinian priest Elias Chacour recounts a powerful incident in his congregation in Ibilim, Israel in 1966 that testifies to precisely this point. He and his people have suffered greatly in the midst of intractable conflict. The village was also bitterly divided in diverse ways. Having recently arrived there, Chacour began preaching about the importance of ecumenism throughout the village, though without success. The only good result was a note from one of his parishioners enjoining him to "Begin first to reconcile brothers, sisters, families in the church together."

Chacour was stung by the "absolute truth" of those words. So, on Palm Sunday 1966, in the midst of an overflowing congregation, he decided to do something. As he celebrated the Eucharist, he felt burdened because he "could see so many people who were at odds with each other." In fact he realised that "every time I turned around to bless the congregation, to give them Christ's peace, I was reminded all over again that there was in reality no peace among these people. Such peace had always been refused.

At the conclusion of the liturgy, Chacour made a startling decision. Before anyone could move, he defied the normal practice of remaining behind the iconostasis (a decorative partition screen separating the sanctuary from the main part of the church). He walked down the center aisle and at the back of the church locked the only two doors to the church and took the key. He then marched back up the aisle, turned around and told the people both that he loved them and that he was saddened to find them so filled with hate and bitterness for one another. In the midst of stunned silence, he went on to say:

"This morning while I celebrated the liturgy, I found someone who is able to help you. In fact, he is the only one who can work the miracle of reconciliation in this village. This person who can reconcile you is Jesus Christ, and he is here with us. We are gathered in his name, this man who rode in triumph into Jerusalem with hosannas ringing in his ears. So on Christ's behalf, I say this to you. The doors of the church are locked. Either you kill each other right here in your hatred and then I will celebrate your funeral gratis, or you use this opportunity to be reconciled together before I open the doors of the church. If that reconciliation happens, Christ will truly become your Lord, and I will know I am becoming your pastor and your priest. That decision is now yours."

Ten minutes passed, and no one said a word. The people sat in silence, locked inside their church. Finally, one man stood up. It was Abu Muhib, a villager serving as an Israeli policeman, who was in his uniform. He stretched out his arms and said, "I ask forgiveness of everybody here and I forgive everybody. And I ask God to forgive me my sins." He and Chacour then embraced, with tears streaming down Abu Muhib's cheeks. Chacour then called for everybody in the church to embrace one another, and tears and laughter mingled as people who had said such ugly words to each other or who had not spoken to each other in many years now were sharing Christ's love and peace.

Chacour then told the congregation that they were now one community and forbade them from becoming divided from one another again. He then noted that "This is not Palm Sunday any longer. This is our Resurrection. We are a community

that has risen from the dead, and we have new life. I propose that we don't want until next Sunday, until Easter, to celebrate the resurrection. I will unlock the doors and then let us go from home to home all over the village and sing the resurrection hymn to everyone." After the people had left, Chacour removed the locks from the church doors and threw them away, along with the key the unlocked church doors were to be a symbol of their new trust and openness.

Lk 24:30,31 Christ continues to heal hurts and memories through communion today, just as He did with the Emmaus disciples - that they would return to Jerusalem, the home of the enemies they fled.

Lk 8:43-48 Why did the woman with the flow of blood find healing, yet most others in the crowd probably did not find healing? The difference is - she brought high expectancy that touching Christ would make the difference. She was not just a member in the pew, but a person hungering for healing and expecting it. During confession (at communion time) when we bring to memory someone who has hurt us and tell the Lord how we feel, then reconciliation and healing can begin. After communion, thank Jesus for the gifts from hurt and ask to be one in living out His reaction.

Renew your baptismal covenant by the confession of your own sin and faith. Recognise that you are forgiven to forgive, in the name of Christ.

Decision and Holy Spirit (Reflections) (Worksheet Item 3)

- a) When I need strength for hard decisions in my life, through what I usually seek?
- b) How active is the Holy Spirit in my life?

Source 6: Testimonies and Witnesses

The stories of people who have lived through great hurts and who have forgiven their enemies are very helpful witnessing for all of us. Gather the testimonies and witnesses of people who have forgiven and listen to their experiences. Find the stories that say to you, "I was there; I know how tough it is" or "I know what you are going through; I forgave; and so can you" Replay their stories when needed. This will prove to be invaluable encouragement when our own situation looks hopeless.

Gen 50:15-21 If anybody had a reason to nurse his wound, Joseph was the man. Rejected and hated by his brothers, sold to a group of travelers in a caravan

destined for Egypt, sold again as a common slave in the Egyptian market, falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, forgotten in dungeon, considered dead by his own father - he refused to remember the offenses; in fact he named his first child Manasseh, a Hebrew name that meant "forget." He explains the reason for his choice in Gen 41:51. He includes an extremely important point - in order for us to forget wrongs done against us, God must do the erasing.

Num 12:1,14 Moses prayed for Miriam in spite of her jealousy

1 Sam 24:17, 26:11 David spared Saul's life magnanimously

2 Sam 19:21-23 David spared Shimei

2 Kings 6:22 Elisha asked King of Israel to set bread and water for captive king of Syria
Acts 7:60 Stephen prayed for those who stoned him to death

2 Cor 11:24-27, 2 Tim 4:16 Think of all the people Paul could have included in his 'hate list'. But he had no such list. With humility he forgot what was behind him. He intentionally disregarded all those who had wronged him.

Source 7: Miscellaneous motivators of strength

a) Crisis: Once the family relationship is broken by jealousy, competition, arrogance, betrayal of trust, greed, is it possible for that family to be reunited. though painful to admit, crisis may have to be present for family members to be reconciled to one another.

- Gen 41:57, 42:3 The account of Joseph and his brothers provides some hope. The crisis of famine forced the brothers to visit Joseph and encounter the brother whom they had wronged. What happens in this type of encounter becomes important to our understanding of the process of forgiveness.
- Gen 25:9 Ishmael reconciles with Isaac at the death of Abraham
- Gen 35:29 Esau continues his reconciliation with Jacob at the death of Isaac.

Consider: In your own experience or that of your family what role has crisis played in the effecting of a reconciliation?

b) Counselors: Our power to act out forgiveness will be determined to a great extent by the kind of people we allow to enter our lives and the depth at which we share ourselves with them. Ideally the counselor would be a person with whom we can be totally honest and open, someone who would understand if we broke down and cried and who would know that crying is healthy. That important, wise and

spiritually minded person can act like a healer, a binder, a bridge-builder, in order to help to find the truth and the justice of the situation.

The chosen person must respect privacy. For sharing with another, our struggle to forgive also has risks. We must find a friend who can keep our struggles confidential. Too many have been further wounded, when they find that strangers know the secrets, intended to be shared with only one friend. Our counselor must not only respect our privacy, but also be reverentially gentle.

c) Others:

- Inspirational sermons
- Sacred music
- Special retreats
- Regular worship
- Small group Bible study

Life application & Conclusion (Worksheet Item 4)

- a) There are many ways of saying "I love you", in order to overcoming communication problems in families. What would you like to do from the list given?
- b) Are there some situations where forgiveness is needed and you don't have the strength to will it? Is there someone who could help motivate you to desire to forgive? Who?

SOURCES OF STRENGTH FOR FORGIVING

Sources:

C ... Christ

H ... Holy Spirit & Scriptures

R ... Repentance & Confession

I ... Intercessory & Imaging Prayers

S ... Sacrament of Communion & Baptismal Vows

T ... Testimonies & Witnesses

1 SOURCE 1: CHRIST, the foremost source



- Jesus suffered the greatest hurt but never retaliated.
- He forgave unconditionally in word and deed.
- He is our perfect example and the ultimate source of strength to forgive.

Key Scriptures

- 1 Pet 2:23 He did not retaliate.
- Lk 5:20–21 He forgave readily.
- Jn 8:10–11 He showed mercy.
- Lk 23:43 He forgave the thief.
- Mk 10:21 He loved the rich young ruler.

2 SOURCE 2: HOLY SPIRIT & HOLY SCRIPTURES



- The Holy Spirit is our greatest counselor and source of strength.
- He shows us our real problem and teaches us through Scripture.
- Meditate on God's Word and focus on His forgiveness.
- Renewed minds replace unhealthy thoughts and enable us to forgive.

Key Scriptures

- Lk 24:13–35 Jesus opened hearts through Scripture.
- Mt 5:23–24 (when we offend)
- Mt 18:21–34 (when we are offended)
- Ps 103:2–5, 10–12 God's mercy is our model.

3 SOURCE 3: REPENTANCE, RESTITUTION & CONFESSION



- Forgiveness includes and follows repentance.
- Confession brings sin into the light and brings freedom (Jas 5:16).
- Make restitution—restore what was harmed or lost.
- Repentance turns us from wrong and leads to new life.

Key Scriptures / Examples

- Gen 42:21–23; 44:32–34 Joseph's brothers confessed.
- Lk 15:17–19 Prodigal son repented.
- Lk 17:3–4 Sequence: Pain → Love → Confrontation → Repentance → Forgiveness → Renewed love.
- Ex 22:1–12; Mt 5:23–24; Lk 17:3 Restitution is part of true repentance.

4 SOURCE 4: INTERCESSORY & IMAGING PRAYER



- Forgiveness is difficult; we need God's grace and the power of prayer.
- Pray for those who hurt us; prayer softens hearts and heals.
- Intercessory prayers of others strengthen us to forgive.
- Use imagination to place the hurt in God's love and release it.

Key Scriptures

- Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27–28 Love and pray for enemies.
- Jas 5:16; Col 3:13–17 Pray for healing and forgiveness.
- In prayer, the Spirit helps us be Christlike (Mt 18:21; Mk 11:25; Lk 23:39).

5 SOURCE 5: SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION & BAPTISMAL VOWS



- Communion celebrates forgiveness and unites us as one body in Christ.
- Examine our hearts and relationships; discern the body (1 Cor 11).
- We are forgiven to forgive.
- Renew our baptismal vows—live as forgiven and forgiving people.

Key Scriptures

- Lk 24:30–21 Christ heals through communion.
- Lk 8:43–48 Faith and expectation bring healing.
- Confession at Communion helps reconciliation begin.

6 SOURCE 6: TESTIMONIES & WITNESSES



- Stories of those who forgave inspire and encourage us.
- Their lives show that God can give strength to forgive.
- Replay their testimonies when our situation seems hopeless.

Key Scriptures / Examples

- Gen 50:15–21 Joseph forgave his brothers.
- Num 12:1, 14 Moses prayed for Miriam.
- 1 Sam 24:17; 26:11 David spared Saul.
- Acts 7:60 Stephen prayed for his executioners.
- 2 Cor 11:24–27; 2 Tim 4:16 Paul forgave and moved on.



God is our strength to forgive.
Draw from these sources and be a channels of His love and grace.



Worksheet 7 (On loving enemies)

A CASE STUDY

Simon Wiesenthal is an educated Jew, he is imprisoned by the Germans in a concentration camp in Poland and as part of his work detail, he is sent from the camp to do cleanup work for the wounded German soldiers, in a hospital that was once the school that Simon attended. Along the way, Simon notices a cemetery for deceased Germans; he notices that each grave has a sunflower on it. This signifies many contrasts between the fate of deceased Nazis and his anticipated fate and those of Jews like him; individual graves, decorated with sunflowers, or mass graves, unmarked and unmarkable? Continual connection to the living world or a loss of all such connection?

On arrival at the hospital, Simon is ordered by a nurse, to follow her into the building. He is taken down the hallways and brought into a room where he encounters a dying Nazi, a twenty-one-year-old SS man named Karl. Karl's body is wrapped in bandages, which cover even his eyes and head, and he is barely able to speak. Yet before he dies he wants to confess a crime that has been "torturing" his memory and more specifically he wants to confess to a Jew. He wants to confess his shame at having become a Nazi. Even more, he wants to confess a particular episode in which he has killed a family that was trying to flee a building crammed with hundreds of Jews, to which the Nazis had set fire. He could not get the family's faces out of his mind; he even covers his blinded eyes as he retells the episode to Simon. Karl has suffered his mortal wounds in a later battle, a battle in which he could not bring himself to shoot another group of Jews, seeing instead the faces of that first family. As those faces prevented him from shooting again, a shell exploded by his side causing his blindness and, eventually, his death.

As Simon listens to Karl's story, he is simultaneously attracted to the authenticity of Karl and repelled by the horrifying tale he is telling. Indeed, Simon's thoughts continually return to the sunflowers, signifying the different worlds of dying Nazis and Jews. As Karl confesses, Simon does not leave; but neither does he speak. Simon has no doubt that Karl's confession reflects "true repentance"; Karl indicates that he wants to die "in peace" and that he has "longed to talk about his crime to a Jew and beg forgiveness from him." Simon is moved by Karl's repentance, yet he concludes that the contrast between the dying Nazi and the

doomed Jew is too great; between them there seemed to rest a sunflower. "At last I made up my mind and without a word I left the room."

Yet Simon is troubled, indeed haunted, by questions about what he did or failed to do. When he returns to the camp, he asks his fellow inmates what they would have done. Simon continues to wonder "Ought I to have forgiven him?" ASK YOURSELF THE CRUCIAL QUESTION; "WHAT WOULD I HAVE DONE?"

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Are there limits to forgiveness?
- Are there some people who simply are unforgivable?
- Are there not some people whom it is better to hate and desire vengeance?
- Is retributive punishment appropriate against particular offenses?
- Can anger be legitimate in certain circumstances?
- Does forgiveness preclude punishment?

Chapter 7: Loving enemies on the path of forgiveness

AIMS OF THE SESSION

O To be challenged to find the answers to some perplexing questions

- Are there limits to forgiveness?
- What are the implications of “Love your enemies”?
- Can anger be legitimate in certain circumstances?
- Does forgiveness preclude punishment?

O To answer the questions in the Case Study "What would I have done"?

- From Social and Moral point of view
- From Jewish point of view
- From Christian point of view

Perplexing Questions

1. Are there limits to forgiveness?

A young rape victim, during the trial of the man who raped her, wanted to know if there was anyway to hold together her belief in a forgiving God and her anger and sense of betrayal at a world in which men rape women and a particular man who seemed to be sorry only that he had been caught. Again, another person, who had been betrayed by one of his coworkers, was filled with venom for his repentant coworker. The betrayal had not only ruined their relationships, but had made him find it increasingly difficult to trust anyone.

In each of these examples, a Christian was struggling to imagine how to practice forgiveness in a situation, or in relation to people where reconciliation seemed a dim prospect on a distant horizon. Thus we are presented with the questions of:

- Whether there are, or at least ought to be, some limits to forgiveness?
- Are there some people who simply are unforgivable?
- What implications does the injunction to “love your enemies” have in relation to these issues?
- That is, are there not some people whom it is better to hate and to desire vengeance against, particularly in the absence of repentance?

- Or, put more in social and political terms, isn't "retributive punishment" appropriate as a society's way of expressing its revulsion against particular offenses?

2. What implications does the injunction to "love your enemies" have in relation to these issues?

Christians have suggested that the appropriate response to such situations ought to be forgiveness. Yet in so doing, have they not seemed to trivialize sufferers' feelings of anger, hatred, and (perhaps) legitimate desires for vengeance. And Christians sometimes tell women that they ought to forgive their abusers and go back to the same situation to have it repeated. Or Christians sometimes suggest that we should not punish people for their offenses but instead should show them love and help rehabilitate them - failing to recognise the ways in which such "softness" both encourages crime and seems to trivialize the suffering of victims. Christians have too often supported forgiveness, love and forbearance, while failing to acknowledge the moral force of anger, hatred and vengeance.

Christian virtue is the vengeful cunning of impotence, in which weakness casts itself as strength and pretends to engage in forgiveness, when it is really an inability to secure vengeance. Weakness is being lied into something meritorious. Out of weakness we deny our desire for vengeance and then we practice a "forgiveness" and a love; and the effects are not reconciliation and new life but rather repressed bitterness and hatred. In such situations, our love of neighbours much less of our enemies, is hardly a sign of authentic virtue.

Christian forgiveness should not be a refusal of strength, but rather ought to manifest an alternative power; Christian love, whether of neighbours or of enemies, should be a sign not of repressed anger and hatred, but of anger and hatred confronted and, eventually, overcome and transcended; it should not be an internalised guilt that further diminishes and destroys but a truthful engagement with the causes and motivations underlying the situation of brokenness.

3. Can anger be legitimate in certain circumstances?

In confronting such misunderstandings and distortions, we need to recognise the power of anger in the work of love. Most specially anger can express (or reclaim) a sense of one's self-worth and hence a refusal to be passive or pacified, in the face of injustice and suffering - whether inflicted on oneself or on others. In this sense,

anger is a moral protest against the diminution and destruction that has been effected by sin and evil, whether on oneself or on others.

Righteous anger is a crucial element in practicing forgiveness, reminding us of the gaps between our commitment to the holiness of God's kingdom and the often harsh realities that we and others have to struggle with each day. The question then, is not whether anger is legitimate or important, it certainly can be. Rather the question is what we become angry about and, more specifically, toward what ends our anger is directed. Eph 4:26 "Be angry, but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger."

Here there is an acknowledgment that people will be angry and presumably also an injunction (a requisition or a demand) that there are things about which people should be angry. The question is not whether or not we should have anger, it will be there. Hence, though we may try to repress or ignore it, we cannot evade its reality. But we are enjoined (commanded) to ensure that our anger, whatever its cause, is transformed into the service of God's inbreaking Kingdom rather than as an occasion for sin

So, in this context, the injunction would seem to suggest that anger can be legitimate if it is in the service of God's inbreaking Kingdom, in the sustenance and edification of those who are members of each other (Eph 4:25)

Christians are called to love our enemies, hoping that this love might produce repentance, conversion, and eventually reconciliation and salvation; at the same time, however, we leave the final judgment concerning and realization of God's eschatological justice where it belongs, in the hands of God.

4. Does forgiveness preclude punishment?

We should not assume that forgiveness precludes punishment. This is particularly the case with enemies who persistently fail to repent. For example, this is the case as can be seen in the extraordinary action of John Paul II who went to an Italian prison to offer forgiveness to Mehmet Ali Agca, the man who had tried to assassinate him. But the Pope did not think that his declaration "I forgive" meant that Agca should be released from prison. This stands in remarkable contrast to some declaration of forgiveness that suggests that forgiveness involves a complete abdication of punishment.

What would have I done? A Case Study (Worksheet Number 7)

The crucial question was posed to a number of prominent intellectuals - Jews, Christians and nonbelievers (including lawyers, rabbis, priests and theologians). Not surprisingly their responses reveal a wide variety of judgments, raise diverse themes and issues, and at times reflect substantial confusion about how the issues ought to be addressed.

1. Social and Moral Point of view

The question is, whether Simon has a right to forgive Karl for offenses committed against other people. Only the victims have such a right. Further one cannot and should not go around happily killing and torturing and then, when the moment has come, simply ask and receive forgiveness. This perpetuates the crime.

The question cannot be asked in the abstract. An honest answer cannot suggest what I would have done, but only what I hope I would have had the courage to do. Further, there are crucial differences in asking how Simon could have been expected to respond at that time, namely a time when he is virtually powerless as a man probably condemned to die a cruel death, and how he might have responded had the circumstances of power (and of attitudes toward the future) been different. At that time, the sunflowers created worlds of difference'

2. Jewish point of view

In the spirit of Jewish tradition, Karl could have said: "I cannot speak for your victim. I cannot speak for the Jewish people. I cannot speak for God. But I am a man. I am a Jew. I am commanded in my personal relations, to act with compassion. I have been taught that if I expect the Compassionate One to have compassion on me, I must act with compassion toward others. I can share with you, in this hour of your deep suffering, what I myself have been taught by my teachers; It is not in my power to render to you the help that could come only from your victims, or from the whole of the people of Israel, or from God. But insofar as you reach out to me, and insofar as I can separate myself from my fellow Jews, for whom I cannot speak, my broken heart pleads for your broken heart; Go in peace"

3. Christian point of view

More decisively, we need to distinguish the question of what Simon as a Jew would or should have done, from what “I” as a Christian would have to say. Again, a further distinction must be pressed; between what a Jew might have said in that circumstance, what a Christian might (or should not) say to a Jew who was in that circumstance, and what a Christian might say in an “analogous” (Resembling, corresponding, comparable, similar, parallel, equivalent) circumstance.

Redemptive Silence: Simon is right to see in his own silence something significant. He may not have explicitly forgiven Karl, but neither did he explicitly refuse such forgiveness. His silence may have disappointed Karl, but surely it was more “redemptive” than some words could have said in response.

We need not only redemptive speech but also redemptive silence. Ingredient in the practice of reconciling forgiveness is knowing when to speak, when to listen, and when to be silent. We should not point out every fault we see in ourselves or in others, nor should we confuse telling everything we think with being truthful in confession and community. (Job 42:7-9) Job's friends truly were friends when they sat with him silently for seven days. It is when they spoke, using pious sounding but unredemptive speech, that they embitter the situation he faced. And so they were judged by God. Our confession is most clearly a part of the practice of reconciling forgiveness when we are able to sustain redemptive silence and speech, when we recognise that our speech is most appropriate when it arises out of the sometimes beautiful, sometimes terrifying silences.

What would or should a Christian say to a Jew who was in Simon's situation? Counsel silence. Non-Jews and perhaps especially Christians should not give advice in such situations (whether it is Holocaust, Bosnia or Rwanda) We Christians, not involved in the situation shall have nothing to say to innocent sufferers anywhere, from Bosnia and Rwandans to contemporary Palestinians, to victims of abuse and other violent offenses. Cheap advice from a Christian would trivialize the lives and deaths of millions. We ought to recognise the importance of knowing what not to say Even so, it is also right to suggest that a Christian in an "analogous" situation ought to be searching for the possibility of grace, for the prospect of discovering and even creating signs of forgiveness.

A Christian in a similar situation is empowered and even commanded to act for God in the process of forgiveness (or in determining that, if there is no repentance, the fullness of forgiveness must, continentally at least, be “withheld” for the sake of future reconciliation). This cannot be cheap grace, nor can it involve a trivialisation of the victims, no can it be an excuse to forget rather than remember.

Moral hatred: Moral hatred signifies our sense that there are situations where people want to say that both the action and the person who performed the action ought to be despised and hated. The moral hatred can come in degrees, that the strongest degree would be reserved for mass murderers. Not to experience indignation at an immoral action, not to have moral hatred for the immoral cause upon which the wrongdoer acted, and not to feel this same aversion towards the wrongdoer himself, if he thoroughly identifies himself with that cause, appear to involve giving up one's commitment to the cause of morality. Jesus seems to encourage us to sustain opposition to our moral opponents and not to reconcile ourselves with them for as long as they remain committed to their bad cause, in Mt 10:34-36 Christians have tended to deny the reality of such hatred, believing that the call to forgive requires us to deny that reality in the name of love and forgiveness. This results in cheap grace, with untransformed passions, thoughts and actions. Too many Christians have linked together a repressed hatred and an ideology of forgiveness. The results, unsurprisingly, are devastating for everybody concerned; for those who inflict suffering and those who suffer, and more broadly, for our communities and politics.

Even so, we are nonetheless, called to love those enemies. That is, we are not permitted to allow our anger at those enemies to ossify (turn or harden) into hatred, into a persistent desire for their diminishment or destruction. To do so would be to return to complicity in sin. That feelings of hatred and vengeance might surface and might be real is undeniable. But they need to be struggled against. Most decisively, we are called to love enemies because that is what we have experienced as the enemies of God - a love that is capable of transforming enemies into friends.

There are innumerable people who stand as a remarkable testimony to the redemptive power of loving enemies. Martin Luther King's struggles throughout the Civil Rights movement in the U.S., represent a power example. There are also the countless witnesses of unnamed exemplars, people who have testified to the possibility and the power of God through their love of enemies who have often done horrifying things. Many of the stories are unknown; but others have been passed on.

Illustration: For example, there is the tale of a remarkable Armenian woman in the early part of this century. The Armenian people have suffered horribly through the centuries, particularly in a Turkish-led genocide in the early part of the 20th century. And yet from the Armenian church comes the following story:

A Turkish officer raided and looted an Armenian home. He killed the aged parents and gave the daughters to the soldiers, keeping the eldest daughter for himself. Sometime later she escaped and trained as a nurse. As time passed, she found herself nursing in a ward of Turkish officers. One night, by the light of lantern, she saw the face of this officer. He was so gravely ill that without exceptional nursing he would die. The days passed, and he recovered. One day, the doctor stood by the bed with her and said to him, "But for this nurse's devotion to you, you would be dead." He looked after and said, "We have met before, haven't we?" "Yes," she replied, "We have met before." "Why didn't you kill me?" he asked. She replied, "I am a follower of Him who said, 'Love your enemies.'"

A Christian might be encouraged to offer a response such as the following: "I cannot speak for your victims. However, I am called on to speak to you as a child of God and as such I am empowered as a disciple of Jesus Christ to pronounce forgiveness in God's name. Indeed, I am commanded, in my personal relations, to act with compassion and forgiveness. I have been taught that if I expect the Compassionate and Forgiving God to have compassion on, and forgiveness for me, I must act with compassion and forgiveness toward others. I see your repentance, and in that repentance, I hear your genuine resolve to create a future that is not bound by the destructiveness of the past and to be able to die in peace. It is not in my power to render to you the help that could come only from your victims. Indeed, Christians are called to seek forgiveness and reconciliation not only from God but also in direct encounter with those whom we have offended.

In this situation, you are not able to repair the damage that you have done, since your victims have died. There are, however, opportunities through which - were you to continue living - you might manifest your forgiveness, and the seriousness of your repentance, to others, through a willing acceptance of the justice of some sort of punishment (for the sake of retribution, deterrence, and rehabilitation), restitution to the victim's families, joining in the struggles against injustice and for reconciliation in other situations, and learning to show compassion and forgiveness with others whom you meet. I cannot speak for your victims - and, perhaps, I cannot even speak for myself - but in the name of God I embrace you, and I tell you: "your sins are forgiven, go in peace, to love God and your neighbour, and sin no more. May the peace of Christ be with you forevermore."

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FORGIVING

A CHOICE • A JOURNEY • A WAY OF LIFE



1 4 C's of Motivators for Forgiving



Commands in Scripture

God commands us to forgive as He has forgiven us.



Covenant of forgiving and being forgiven

We are called to extend and receive forgiveness.



Cost of non-forgiving

Unforgiveness hurts us spiritually, emotionally and relationally.



Chain of benefits in forgiving

Forgiveness brings healing, peace, freedom and restored relationships.

2 Basic Principles of Forgiving



1. Forgiveness is a promise.



2. Forgiving includes past, present and future.



3. Forgiving is a process with definite stages.



4. Forgiveness is a free gift of love.



5. Forgiveness is a choice and a struggle.



6. Forgiveness begins at home.



7. Forgiveness is a way of life/ a habit.

3 Common Rules for Forgiving



1 Put yourself in the place of the other person.



2 Admit the pain and Acknowledge the hurt.



3 Report the pain of hurt; not anger or revenge.



4 Disregard unintentional and minor hurts.



5 Offer apology and grow into maturity.



6 Notice that forgiveness is not a feeling but a duty.

4 Steps in Practicing Forgiveness



1 Resolve/ Decide to forgive

Decide in your heart to forgive, whether you feel like it or not.



2 Restore Communication

Take the initiative, speak honestly, listen with sensitivity and love.



3 Rebuilt/ Reestablish new relationship

Go beyond forgiveness to build trust, understanding and brotherly love.



4 Rejoice and Celebrate

Celebrate reconciliation; honour the grace and mark the peace.



5 Refrain from remembering the incident/ hurt

Choose not to dwell on the hurt, release it and move forward.

5 Sources of Strength for Forgiving



1. Christ, the foremost source

Jesus is our perfect example. He forgave completely and unconditionally.



2. Holy Spirit and Holy Scriptures

The Holy Spirit and God's Word counsel us, transform us and renew our minds.



3. Repentance, Restitution and Confession

True forgiveness follows repentance, honest confession and making things right.



4. Intercessory and imaging prayer

Prayer releases God's power. Praying and imagining forgiveness heals hearts.



5. Sacrament of Communion and Baptismal Vows

Communion reminds us we are forgiven to forgive; renewing our vows strengthens our commitment.



6. Testimonies and Witnesses

Stories of those who forgave encourage us that God can give strength to forgive.



Forgiveness does not excuse the wrong,
but it releases the wrongdoer and the offended
to the healing power of God's love.

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

