



Week 3 Discussion Guide

Face the Issue:

In our last week of this series, Jeremy focused his sermon on how sometimes we forget what an extraordinary God we have. We sometimes trivialize our relationship with Him when in fact it is anything but trivial. If you have accepted God's gift of grace through Christ, God has forgiven you of your sins. Not only has He forgiven, He has forgotten. That is a sign of a remarkable and loving Father. A Christ follower can't live for too long before realizing we need to know how to forgive. We may want to forgive and try to forgive, yet still feel tormented by hurt and anger.

Author Lewis Smedes describes the way we sometimes feel: "I'll never understand why you did that. There is no understanding it. You didn't have to do what you did....You did it of your own free will, and I hate you for it-at least I hate that part of you; and I blame you for it. I can't get over it or excuse it or understand it."

What do you do when you feel this way?

What, to you, is the hardest thing about forgiving someone?

Into the Word:

Jeremy taught from **Matthew 18:21-35**. Reread this passage to refresh your memory.

How would you explain Jesus' words in Matthew 18:34-35: "In anger his master turned him over to the jailers, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart"?

Read Matthew 6:12-15

How do these two passages compare, especially Matthew 6:15, where Jesus says, "But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins"?

Some interpret these passages as saying that our refusal to forgive actually hinders God's forgiveness for us. Others say that Christ's death established our forgiveness and that Jesus is saying that God will hold us accountable for our stubbornness.

Either way, there is no mistaking the ultimate message of Jesus that if we don't forgive, something goes terribly wrong in our relationship with God.

Read Matthew 5:38-48

Think about a time when someone did wrong you. What did you want from that person?

Other than forgiving, what are some ways people react to being wronged?

What happens to the person who refuses to forgive? What affect does that decision have on his or her life?

Apply The Word

Lewis Smedes also wrote that true forgiveness requires three basic actions:

- (1) We surrender our right to get even.
- (2) We rediscover the humanity of our wrongdoer.
- (3) We wish our wrongdoer well.

Which of those steps have you found the most difficult, and why?

What reasons do people give for not forgiving?

How should we as Christ followers reply to these reasons?

Forgiveness has been described as an unnatural act because it requires us to be willing to put up with an uneven score.

If forgiveness is so hard, why bother with it?

What makes it possible for a Christian to live with an uneven score?

Ask God to give you the honest ability to search your heart for a wrong that you may be struggling to forgive. Once the Holy Spirit has brought it to your mind, ask God for the grace you need to fully forgive.