

Love Forgives & Forgets, Pt. 1
Next Steps Personal & Connect Group Devotional Guide
Sermon Series: Are You A Good Neighbor?
September 11, 2022
Kelly Stanley

These talking points, questions and scriptures are designed to help you take the next step. Take time with each section. Spread this devotional guide out over days, even the next week so that you can really reflect, meditate, contemplate, and pray. Use your sermon outline's points, Scriptures and Bible to supplement this personal devotional guide:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 14:1 and 1 Corinthians 13:5c from your sermon notes. How do you handle it when someone wrongs you or hurts you?
2. There are five major myths about forgiveness: Myth #1: A person should not be forgiven until they ask for it. Myth #2: Forgiveness includes minimizing the offense and the pain that was caused. Myth #3: Forgiveness includes restoring trust and reuniting a relationship. Myth #4: You haven't really forgiven until you've forgotten the offense. Myth #5: When I see someone else hurt, then it is my duty to forgive the offender. All are false. What do you think of these myths and have you ever accepted them as fact?
3. Read Luke 17:4 and Luke 23:34 in your sermon notes under point #1 that begins with, "*Forgiveness is not.*" Why do you think we believe that forgiveness is conditional? Do you make forgiveness conditional? Why or why not?
4. Read John 8:10-11 in your sermon notes under point #2 that begins with, "*Forgiveness is not.*" Some people erroneously think that forgiveness is minimizing the seriousness of the offense. They say things such as, "*It's not a big deal*" or "*It's OK. It didn't really hurt me*" or "*Don't worry about it. I'm okay.*" Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery but He did not minimize her offense. Do you minimize an offense or maximize an offense in terms of holding on to it?
5. There is a difference between being wounded and wronged. Being wounded refers to something done to you that is accidental. It was not intentional. Being wronged refers to something being done against you intentionally to hurt you. Have you ever confused these two? Do you agree that when we minimize a wrong we cheapen forgiveness? Explain.
6. Read Isaiah 59:2 in your sermon notes under point #3 that begins with, "*Forgiveness is not.*" For a relationship to be restored, the offender must make changes that are visible and measurable. Forgiveness is to be instant. Forgiveness takes care of the damage, but in order to restore the relationship trust has to be restored. Do you agree? Explain. Three things are required for restoration to occur:
 - a. Read 2 Corinthians 7:10 in your sermon notes under point #3, sub-point (a) under the heading, "*Three Things Are Required for Restoration.*" Genuine remorse is required. Have you ever felt someone was not being genuine in their remorse? If so, how did you feel and what was your response? Have you ever not been genuine in your remorse? Why and what were the results?
 - b. Read Numbers 5:5-7 in your sermon notes under point #3, sub-point (b) under the heading, "*Three Things Are Required for Restoration.*" Read Luke 18:18-23 in your sermon notes under point #3, sub-point (b). Jesus knew that the rich man had acquired his wealth by dishonest means. The proof of his remorse would be restitution. Have you ever experienced someone making restitution to you for the damage they did? Explain.
 - c. From your Bible compare Luke 22:54-62 with John 21:15-21. From your Bible compare Acts 15:36-41 with 2 Timothy 4:11. From your Bible compare Genesis 27:41 with Genesis 33:4. From your Bible compare Luke 15:11-24 with Luke 15:25-32. What did you notice in these comparisons?
7. Read the last verse in point #3 that begins with, "Forgiveness is not . . ." — Proverbs 18:19. When have you experienced this and what happened?
8. Take your Bible and read Ephesians 4:31-32. We naturally assume that it is easy for God to forgive, but the truth is just the opposite. For God to forgive us, it required Him coming in the person of Jesus Christ, living a perfect and sinless life, and then dying one of the worst ways in His day — death by scourging and crucifixion. There was nothing easy about it for Jesus. This is why it is no less easier for us either. Now personalize this for you — what makes it hard for you to forgive someone who has wronged you and why?
9. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 5:23-24 in point #4 in your sermon notes that begins with, "*Forgiveness is not.*" Jesus says that if we come to church to worship and remember while we are here that we have a ruptured relationship with someone, we are to take four actions. Look at these in point #4 under the sub-points of (a), (b), (c) and (d). If you are the one who offended, you wronged someone, then you are to swallow your pride and go in person and do what is necessary to restore the relationship. Read the explanation for the Greek New Testament word translated as "reconcile." Who do you need to do this with immediately?
10. We looked at four questions people raise about forgiving someone.
 - a. When we ask for forgiveness from someone we have wronged, there is the risk they will refuse. The main reason for this is they may need more time to heal. Has this ever happened to you? If so, did it ever change? If so, why?

- b. When we ask for forgiveness from someone we have wronged we run the risk of making things worse than they were. Why? Because they have enjoyed having you as some kind of “mental doll” in which they stick you with symbolic pins. Asking for forgiveness takes away their blame and puts the guilt on them. We see this with how King Saul treated David in 1 Samuel 18:5-9. Take your Bible and read this.
 - c. Sometimes we think we only need to ask God for forgiveness when we have wronged someone. This is willful disobedience and can cause things to get worse. Have you ever done this? Why? What happened?
 - d. Sometimes we cannot go personally to the person we have wronged because they have died. Find a trusted person and confess it to them. Read James 5:16 in your sermon notes under this point. Now read King David’s words in Psalms 32:3-4 and in 2 Samuel 12:13-14 in your sermon notes under this point. If you only ask God to forgive you because you have too much pride to ask the person you have wronged, God will forgive you but He may allow future misfortune to come your way. Have you ever experienced this? If so, why and what happened? What did you learn from it?
11. Read Matthew 18:21 in your sermon notes in point #4.
 - a. In Peter’s day, Jews were taught there was a limit to forgiving someone — 3 times. Peter thinks he is being very magnanimous. He doubles 3 and adds 1 to make it the perfect number in Jewish thought — 7. Have you put a limit on the number of times you will forgive a person? Why?
 - b. Read Jesus’ response to Peter in Matthew 18:22. Jesus is not referring to a literal 490 times. Jesus’ point is forgiveness is limitless. Put yourself in Peter’s shoes. If this had been you, what do you think your thoughts and actions would have been? Why?
12. Read the story Jesus told to Peter and His disciples in Matthew 18:23-35 in your sermon notes in point #4. This story told by Jesus gives us several motivating and even frightening reasons we should forgive anyone:
 - a. If we refuse to forgive someone who has wronged us, we are guilty of intentional disobedience and hypocrisy. Our theme verse for this whole sermon series has been Jesus’ words in Matthew 22:37-40. Take your Bible and read these words by Jesus. To refuse to forgive means we are lying to ourselves — no matter what we claim, we do not love God or our neighbor has Jesus described in Matthew 22:37-40. Read Matthew 18:32-33 in point #4 in your sermon notes. In the story Jesus told, the king represents God. So, why should you forgive anyone who has wronged you?
 - b. To refuse to forgive someone who has wronged you can cause God to bring inner torment on you. Most people misread this story by Jesus. They think the story ends in verse 35. NO! It ends in verse 34. Verse 35 is Jesus’ commentary on what happens if we refuse to forgive anyone who has wronged us. The same Greek New Testament word translated as “torment” in Matthew 18:35 is used in Matthew 8:5-6 of a crippled man who was tortured from his paralysis. Read Matthew 8:5-6 in your sermon notes in point # (ii) under the heading, “Jesus’ Story Motivates Us To Forgive Because . . .”
 - c. A more frightening and terrorizing reason we should forgive is found in Luke 16:23-24. Read this in your sermon notes in point # (ii). This is the story of the rich man and his servant named Lazarus. Both die. The rich man is in Hades (hell) feeling the torment of the flames. Lazarus is in Paradise living eternally in the peace and love from God. Jesus’ point with using the this word translated as “torture” is to impress upon us that refusing to forgive anyone who has wronged us has huge consequences for us. There are mental consequences — we replay the wrong over and over, emotional. There are emotional consequences — we get bitter and resentful. There are and psychological consequences — we become skeptical and suspicious of God and everyone. Jesus’ point is this torture is inflicted upon us by God and this torture can even affect us physically — the rich stated his body was tormented in the flames. Have any of these consequences ever occurred to you or someone you know?
 - d. Jesus said in Matthew 18:23-35 that the man who was forgiven by the king had been forgiven the equivalent of 200,000 years wages, which computes today to \$7.5 billion. This was something that was impossible for him to repay the king. After being forgiven by the king of his debt he owed the king, he then went out and found someone who owed him the equivalent of 100 days wages or 1/3 year’s wages. When the guy who asked him for more time to repay it, he refused to give it and had the man thrown into prison until he could repay the debt. The problem with the man being in prison is that in that day he would not have been paid for any hard labor. So, he threw the man who owed him into prison for the rest of his life. A couple questions to ponder:
 - i. Have you ever known anyone who has been forgiven a debt they owe God — a debt they could never repay — and then refuse to forgive someone who wronged them? What were the results?
 - ii. Have you ever done this? Why and what do you know God is telling you to do and if you do not, what He will allow to happen to you? Do you really want God to allow this kind of torture in your life? What will you do?
13. There is a fifth thing forgiveness is not. Forgiveness is not my right when I am not the victim. When someone else has been wrong and you could say, “*Well, I forgive them.*” That is not your right because you were not the victim. Forgiveness costs and if you are not the direct victim, then it really does not cost you anything. Have you ever done this? If so, why and what happened? What did you learn from it?
14. At the end of the sermon, you were given three action steps to take this week. Are you willing to do them? Read each one and then do what it says? What did God reveal to you? What did you learn? How will you apply what you learned? Take your Bible and read James 1:22-25? What is this telling you to do?