

ISSUES:

FORGIVENESS

Memory Verse: Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Lesson: Read Ephesians 4:25-32

- Why should we forgive anyone?

Christ forgave us! How can we not pass that on to those around us? Matthew 6:14-15 tells us that if we don't forgive others when they sin against us, then the Father will not forgive our sins. Read the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:21-35. It seems that God will treat us as we treat other people. Yikes! Ephesians 4:18 talks about a hardened heart and how it separates people from the life of God. Failing to forgive can create that hardened heart in us and separate us from God. It's hard to turn pressure points into praise if we don't let go of the pressure and surrender our hurts to Jesus. Forgiving others is in our own best interests! Shows mercy, restores joy, affirms love, proves obedience, restores fellowship and provides victory over Satan.

- Is it okay to be angry? Do we have the right to be offended? Why or why not?

Anger is an emotion and the Bible doesn't condemn anger. Even Jesus got angry. As we talked about last week, our response is the real issue. Ephesians 4:26 says "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger". Anger is an issue that needs to be resolved in our lives – before the end of the day. We also know that we belong to Jesus Christ. We have no rights on our own. We have given them all up to Him. Anybody who offends us is offending a child of God and will have to deal with Him about that. It's none of our business and I, for one, don't want to get caught in the middle! We relinquish our right to get even, respond to evil with good, pray for those who offend us and remember we are all imperfect.

- How does the devil get a foothold in our lives due to unforgiveness in our hearts?

A hardened heart, unresolved anger, bitterness – all mess up our communication with God. Maybe unforgiveness is even a lack of trust in God. We are saying that we need justice, we have to determine what (or who) is right and keep the scales even. Only God is righteous. Only He can decide justice. When we fail to forgive then, we are trying to take God's place. We are disobeying. The devil loves that! Anything he can use to distract us from God, from growing closer to God or from being more like Jesus is all good from his point of view! Let's not give the devil that foothold. In the name of Jesus Christ we rebuke him and give the Holy Spirit dominance in our lives. Let's forgive like Jesus did so the devil doesn't get even a little toe hold in our lives.

- Do you have anyone you need to forgive? Do they need to apologize first?

Forgiveness deals with what is in our heart, not theirs. We need to forgive whether the person who offended us apologizes or not. Consider this – they have already been forgiven by God even if they have yet to accept that gift. God loves them and wants a growing, more intimate relationship with them just like He does with us. We may be the only Jesus that they ever see. Our response – our forgiveness – could be how they define a Christ-follower from now on. Not only would unforgiveness hurt us - keep us from that intimate relationship with God and give the devil a foothold in our lives – could it also turn someone else off to this relationship by giving them an inaccurate perception of what a Christ-follower looks like and how they respond to hurts and offenses?

Daily Devotional Reading:

- Day #1: Galatians 6
 - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:

- Day #2: Ephesians 1
 - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:

- Day #3: Ephesians 2
 - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:

- Day #4: Ephesians 3
 - Focusing on God and responding to His Word:

- Day #5: Ephesians 4
 - Focusing on God and responding to His Word: