



HELP, I'M STUCK 5

The Pit of Unforgiveness



→ What's so impressive about Nelson Mandela? How was Joseph still able to minister to his brothers in Genesis or David to keep his integrity with King Saul in 1 Samuel? Any other forgiveness superstars you can think of?

→ What about people who've stubbornly refused to forgive? Any stories worth telling? Famous cases? Biblical characters? Friends or families?

THE DANGERS OF UNFORGIVENESS

- a) It can POISON your HEART.
- b) TORMENT you at night.
- c) BLOCK your PRAYERS.
- d) JEOPARDISE future RELATIONSHIPS.

→ Any other dangers? Can you give Bible chapter and verse? Think David or Jonah?

If you allow the SEED OF OFFENCE to take root in the SOIL of INSECURITY, it produces a ROOT OF BITTERNESS leading to the FRUIT OF RESENTMENT.

→ "Unforgiveness is like taking poison but expecting someone else to die." ...

"Unforgiveness is choosing to stay trapped in a jail cell of bitterness, serving time for someone else's crime." Discuss!

→ "Unforgiveness is one of the most damaging pits you can fall in and one of the toughest to escape from." Discuss!

→ What is it like to live as a victim? What are the signs and symptoms? Contrast that with what it means to be more than a conqueror in Christ (Rom 8:37)

3 PRINCIPLES

1. FORGIVENESS IS NOT ABOUT JUSTICE, BUT FREEDOM

- * Good news: Forgiveness will SET YOU FREE
- * Is God not interested in JUSTICE? Absolutely: VENGEANCE IS MINE, SAITH THE LORD (Hebrews 10:30, Romans 12:19)
- * Remarkable thing = Justice has ALREADY been ADMINISTERED on the CROSS.
- * All we have to do is FALL ON HIS MERCY.
- * KEY becomes: Vengeance is GOD'S prerogative, not YOURS.
- * People get themselves into DREADFUL PICKLES trying to FIX things they have no RIGHT or NEED to.
- * You have to RELEASE it from your hands and PLACE it in His.
- * You have to stop PURSUING JUSTICE which isn't your job, and start EXERCISING FORGIVENESS which is.
- * Sometimes people get so OBSESSED with PERSONAL JUSTICE that they don't even notice that HANDCUFFS are being placed subtly on their wrists ... and that they're falling into a PIT.

→ What do those handcuffs look like? Why is it a prison? How does being a prisoner affect your view on the world?

→ Are you happy to trust justice / vengeance issues to the Lord or are you a meddler? Can you let it go or do you hang on? Do you have problems with self-justification, blame, defensiveness?

→ "We stop God working justice, vengeance, redemption, liberation on our behalf, because we cling onto it so tightly + don't let Him have it." Discuss

2. FORGIVENESS IS NOT ABOUT FEELINGS, BUT FAITH

- * We'll almost certainly never FEEL like it because it HURTS.
- * Trouble is, we've been told a pack of lies about forgiveness:
 - a) Forgiveness must be DESERVED.
 - b) If I forgive them I'm LETTING THEM OFF THE HOOK and they need to be held ACCOUNTABLE
 - c) I will forgive EVENTUALLY, when I FEEL like it and then it will be EASY.
 - d) My refusal to forgive is PUNISHING them.
 - e) Unforgiveness HURTS THEM and PROTECTS ME.
 - f) Forgiving requires RECONCILIATION.

→ Do you struggle with any of these lies? Do you disagree with them? Which one is the strongest? Are there any others you'd add to the list?

- * We need to get PAST all that and FORGIVE (Colossians 4:12-15)

→ Read Colossians 4:12-15 and talk about what we learn about the attitude of forgiveness. Who is it for? When? How? How do verses 12,14 and 15 feed into verse 13 and vice-versa?

- * Forgiveness is not a SUGGESTION, but an IMPERATIVE.
- * We don't forgive because we WANT to or it MAKES SENSE to us or because we know how it will all WORK OUT, but because it is COMMANDED by GOD in His WORD.

3. FORGIVENESS IS NOT JUST A DECISION, BUT A LIFESTYLE

- * Jesus TAUGHT, MODELLED & DEMANDED forgiveness.
- Jesus took teaching way beyond 'an eye for an eye.' What exactly did He teach?
- * There are to be NO LIMITS to your FORGIVENESS, just as there are NO LIMITS to God's MERCY (Matthew 18:21-22, then 23-35).
 - * So, forgiving is not a ONCE-OFF ACT, but a LIFESTYLE DECISION ... Not an IMPULSE, but an ATTITUDE ... It must be a STAKE in the GROUND.
- What is that 'stake in the ground' and what does it say?
- * Guy C: "It's not about being LESS EASILY OFFENDED, but becoming UNOFFENDABLE."
 - * Then you're on SOLID ROCK ... The enemy's assaults are DISARMED ... People, events & offences LOSE THEIR POWER to ENSLAVE you.

RESPONSE

→ Are you quick to forgive? Do you hold onto things for ages? Are you easily offended? What would it take to become 'unoffendable'? Is there anything you'd like prayer for? Is there anything / anybody who's left you with lasting wounding that you'd like to forgive?