



September 18, 2022, | David Smith
FORGIVENESS FOR EVERYONE

All of us, at some point in our lives, realize that we can't do it on our own. That is why prayer is our best work.

MEETING AGENDA

WELCOME (10 MINUTES)

This week we will return to Jesus teaching the disciples how to pray in the book of Luke and see how prayer is the key to everything we need to be and do with God as we learn to ask for forgiveness and forgive others.

Don't forget to take attendance via the attendance reminder email.

ICEBREAKER (10 MINUTES)

Sometimes our prayers are not answered how we think they will be or should be. In hindsight, what are some prayers you can reflect on and be thankful for that were not answered according to how you prayed them?

INTRODUCTION (5-10 MINUTES)

Anchor Verses: Luke 11:1-13

Do you feel confused when the Bible says to ask for forgiveness and that believers are forgiven once and forever? How do you understand the difference between receiving forgiveness and asking for forgiveness? This week we will return to Jesus teaching the disciples how to pray in the book of Luke and see how prayer is the key to everything we need to be and do with God as we learn to ask for forgiveness and forgive others.

INTO THE WORD (25 MINUTES)

1. **Read Luke 11:4 and 1 John 1:9. Why do you think it is so important that we forgive others in combination with God's forgiveness of our sins?**

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[The most straightforward answer is that God wants us to forgive others as he has forgiven us. God has instructed us to do this in multiple places throughout scripture. Rick Warren points out in his article, "Three Reasons God Says to Forgive Others," that we also should forgive because we should be gracious and forgive others just as God has mercifully. He says, "Remember that you haven't always gotten what you deserved, either. God has been gracious with you. Now choose to be gracious to others." He also says that it is important to forgive others because the alternative is bitterness. Rick says, "Resentment will not change the past, and it won't solve the problem. It doesn't even make you feel better. It makes you feel worse." Rather than holding on to our resentment and allowing it to control us, freedom comes through letting go of the grudges we hold against others.]

2. **Why does asking God for forgiveness lead directly to our ability to forgive others? Read Matthew 18:21-35 to be reminded how inconsistent people can be. Granting forgiveness is one of the most vital expressions of love. Do you find it easier to forgive those who are closest to you? What about someone you barely know?**

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[Answers will vary. In the context of the parable (Matt 18:22), the rabbis taught that people should forgive those who offended them only three times. Peter, trying to be incredibly generous, asked Jesus if seven were enough times to forgive someone. But Jesus answered, "seventy times seven," meaning that we shouldn't keep track of how many times we forgive someone. We should always forgive those who truly repent, no matter how many times they ask. From Matt 18:35, we should realize that because God has forgiven all our sins, we should not withhold forgiveness from others. Understanding how completely Christ has ignored us should produce a free and generous attitude of forgiveness toward others. When we don't forgive others, we set ourselves outside and above Christ's law of love.]

3. **Read Isaiah 43:18 -19 and consider what God says about letting go of the pain others may have caused us in the past. Jesus further explained this point in Luke 9:62, when He told us not to dwell on the past. How can prayer help us put aside bitterness and anger to forgive others so that we may move forward and enjoy the blessings God has for us in the present?**

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[Answers will vary. Isaiah 43:18 -19 says, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!" Here, God is instructing us how to forgive others so that we may move forward and experience the fullness of God's forgiveness in our own lives. It is difficult to focus on the many blessings we receive if we constantly think about past injuries and injustices. God wants us to enjoy our blessings now. Luke 9:62; "But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Here, Jesus is reminding us that He has forgotten our past; therefore, we are not to "continue to live there." He wants us to move forward in faith and live the way God created us.]

APPLICATION (25 MINUTES)

1. **Read Luke 11:4 and Matthew 6:14-15. Think of things others have done to you which have been difficult to forgive. What are some ways that we can forgive others in those situations?**

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

*[In their article, "8 Steps to Forgiving Others," Irvine Christian Counseling suggests eight steps to forgiving others, or "letting go," as the word means in scripture. **First**, we need to acknowledge the pain. "Don't numb yourself or "stuff" the emotion as that cuts off the process of forgiving others before it has begun." **Second**, think things through and admit how the person did makes you feel. **Third**, think about how you would feel if you wanted to be forgiven for something and the other person withheld it. Just as Jesus said we must do to others what we would have them do to us (Matthew 7:12), we should forgive for the same reason. **Fourth**, remember how God has forgiven us. Just as God has forgiven us our debt against him, we should be willing to forgive others for what they have done to us. **Fifth**, remember the biblical command which ties forgiveness of others to God's forgiveness of us. "Pray that this would hit home in your heart; your decision to obey would force your emotions to catch up." **Sixth**, pray to God to help you let go of the pain and choose to move forward. **Seventh**, continue to forgive. Forgiveness can be an ongoing process and a decision you will need to make repeatedly. Lastly, pray for the person who hurt you. Take to heart Jesus's command that we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. "Ask God to reveal his love to your offender in your heart, and for him to dissolve negative emotions." Forgiveness can be challenging, but these practical steps can help us overcome our negative emotions and let go of what others have done to us.]*

2. **Proverbs 15:18 reminds us that conflict has two different approaches. Think of an example of unforgiveness or one-way forgiveness that you or someone you know has experienced, perhaps leading to months or years of strained and broken relationships where restoration and reconciliation have not been achieved. How are the parties in these situations negatively impacted? What can we always do when it seems like there is nothing we can do?**

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[Answers will vary. If we are directly involved, we can seek more profound levels of confession and repentance. Remember that confession is verbally acknowledging sin to others and being deeply sincere with God and ourselves. Repentance is often more complicated and requires us to develop the desire and behavior to "kill" the sources of sin in our life. Intercessory prayer is always available when we see unforgiveness causing pain and brokenness in relationships outside our immediate circle.]

3. **In Galatians 5:22-23, we read that peace is one of the fruits of the spirit. The Hebrew word Shalom means peace. Shalom also means Hello and Goodbye. Think about how prayer can help you to release hurt and anger from your life by allowing you to forgive someone who may have never apologized to you peacefully. How can say Goodbye free you from the weight of judgment, allowing you to live in peace?**

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[Answers will vary. Galatians 5:22-23 says: "22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things, there is no law." Unresolved anger against a person keeps us tied to them. By forgetting the offense, we release ourselves from that tie. Stopping a sod allows God to deal with that person, and we are no longer responsible. There is great relief and peace and saying goodbye to this responsibility.]

Prayer Prompts (5-10 MINUTES) (Choose 1 or both)

Thanksgiving – Thanking God for what He has done [Isaiah 12:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18]

1. As a group, spend 5 minutes sharing things you are grateful to God for in your life. Afterward, close your night in prayer and thank God for using your group's list.
2. This week, listen to a piece of instrumental music and write a prayer of worship or thanks to God. If comfortable, share with the group the following week.

PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Dear God, we know that forgiveness is an essential part of our prayer lives, and we need your help understanding, extending, and accepting that forgiveness. Please help us to confess and repent when necessary and to get your loving forgiveness. Please help us know how to forgive others in the way you lead us. Thank you for making us alive in Christ through forgiving our sins! In Jesus' name, Amen.