



**Sermon Based Small Group
Leader Discussion Guide**

Sermon Title: A Lesson in Forgiveness

**Sermon by Pastor Tom Harrington
Week of June 13, 2010**

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Session Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become more willing to request and share forgiveness • Develop a personal definition of forgiveness based on biblical examples. • Pray for God’s work in transforming our church’s attitude towards forgiveness.
Big Idea	<p>Christians need to understand the importance in receiving forgiveness from God and the need to forgive and receive forgiveness from one another in order to maintain close communion with God. </p>
Study Introduction	<p>Forgiveness is one of the most misunderstood subjects in the Bible. Forgiveness in our time has become little more than a therapeutic way of detaching ourselves from those who have harmed us. Yet the heart of true forgiveness is so much richer than many of us realize.</p> <p>We all want to obtain mercy from God, for Him to overlook our mistakes and cover our slip-ups in the blood of Jesus. But are we willing to do the same for others?</p> <p>When we look at others, we see the mistakes that they have made. When we look at ourselves, we see all the good intentions that we had. Have you ever fallen into that trap before? We all have. But, even when we read the Lord’s Prayer, we were told to pray for God to forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us. Notice that, just like in the</p>

	<p>Beatitudes, our own forgiveness here is conditional upon whether we are willing to forgive others.</p> <p>What about “forgiving God,” or “forgiving ourselves”? Do we wait for the one who has harmed us to say, “I’m sorry”? These are only some of the questions that one must ask as we study the following passage from the book of Luke.</p>
<p>Personal Connection</p>	<p>How does my story connect to the reading?</p> <p>What do you expect will be the biggest challenge for yourself in studying the “A Lesson in Forgiveness”? Members will be familiar with this dramatic story of the woman who was caught in adultery. What additional features of the story did they only just notice when they heard it read again? Perhaps they will mention that the event occurs in the temple and after Jesus has gathered people for a teaching session; that the gospel connects this story with the “I am the light of the world” proclamation; that we are not told what Jesus wrote (or drew) upon the ground. Make the point that when an offender repents, the person is inviting us to see ourselves as “on the same side”, at least in so far as we view the offense as wrong and the offender as blameworthy. Emphasize the difference between a total or blanket excuse, and a partial excuse. Brainstorm some partial excuses that a person—for example, the woman caught in adultery—might have for betraying a trust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework Update: Pastor Harrington gave us homework during his sermon. He challenged us to more freely share Christ’s gift of forgiveness with others. As a church family, he also encouraged us to examine relationships that we may need to request forgiveness from another. Activity: Encourage them to share successes and challenges with this topic.
<p>Ice Breaker</p>	<p>Think of a time either recent or when you were growing up, when you received forgiveness. Were you incredibly thankful and relieved? What was it about forgiveness that was so important? How did it feel to receive the gift of forgiveness?</p>
<p>Sermon Text</p>	<p><i>Luke 7:36-50</i></p>
<p>Digging Deeper</p>	<p>Learning more about the lesson</p> <p>Read Luke 7:36-50</p> <p><i>36Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she</i></p>

began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. 39When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

40Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,[d] and the other fifty. 42Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. 44Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." 48Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

1. Reread Luke 7:36-50. In verses 36-39, how is the woman described? Look carefully at what she does. What different emotions does she express here? How do you think she feels about herself? What would motivate this woman to crash a dinner party, bring this expensive gift and weep before Jesus?
2. According to Warren Wiersbe, "The most miserable prison in the world is the prison we make for ourselves when we refuse to show mercy. Our thoughts become shackled, our emotions are chained, the will is almost paralyzed. But when we show mercy, all of these bonds are broken, and we enter into a joyful liberty that frees us to share God's love with others."

Look at the theme of knowledge: What does the Pharisee think he knows about:

- a) The woman
- b) Jesus
- c) Himself

What does Jesus claim to know about:

- a) The woman
- b) The Pharisee
- c) Himself

3. Reread the last three sentences of this passage. The term love and forgiveness seem to be such difficult words to define. The words seem to be used interchangeably in this passage. What does that tell you about each?

Examples of forgiveness:

Esau and Jacob (Genesis 33:4 - 15)
Joseph (Genesis 45:8 - 15)

Moses (Numbers 12:1 - 13)
David (2 Sam 19:18 - 23)
Solomon (1 Kings. 1:52, 53)
Jesus (Luke 23:34)
Stephen (Acts 7:59-60)
Paul (2 Timothy 4:16)

4. Notice the interesting turn that Jesus takes toward Simon in verses 44-47. How is Simon different from the woman? How is she better than he? Who do you think is the worse sinner here, the woman or Simon? (Note: this is not an easily answered question. There should be quite a bit of discussion since there are good arguments on both sides.)
5. What might we learn here about approaching Jesus?
6. How would the gift of peace be realized in her life? What would have changed in her situation? Would she still be a prostitute? How would she handle the circumstances of her life differently now that she has met Jesus?

Personal Reflection

Facilitator Tip: *Save time for the personal reflection time. If your group is large do this in groups of two or three.*

1. Are there ways that you feel 'unclean' - labeled by yourself or by society? For example - someone might have a weight problem and feel like it is their fault or branded by that physical challenge.
2. What are ways you have labeled someone because of something you thought you knew about them - or assumed about them that was unfair? Did you work to change your attitude? Are there ways that the church might make a judgment upon a situation or person unfairly?
3. What does Jesus want our attitude to be toward those who struggle in life?

<p>Taking it Home</p>	<p>How will I live it? Apply it?</p> <p>Have there been wrongs committed against you that you are still holding on to? Try this forgiveness activity.</p> <p>How To Forgive in 5 Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make a list of the actions, not the people, that have hurt you. 2. Pray and ask God to heal those broken places that this has caused in your life and your relationship with Him. 3. Ask God to forgive you for your lack of forgiveness and to help you to release any anger or resentment you have held in your heart, to truly show you how to forgive. 4. Destroy the paper with the offenses on it once and for all! 5. Write the names of the offender(s) on a separate sheet of paper without their actions. Start using this as your prayer list. Commit to praying for these people regularly. <p>Once you have done this, you may still feel like you have not fully forgiven the person. But, forgiveness is a conscious spiritual decision. And you have made it. Sometimes it just takes a second for your emotions to catch up with your spirit.</p> <p>If you have angry feelings about the offender again, just take that thought captive (2Corinthians 10:5)! Confess aloud that you have forgiven that person. Then begin to pray for them. Over time, your emotions will come in line with your spirit.</p>
<p>Prayer Focus</p>	<p>How can I connect with God and others through prayer?</p> <p>During the personal reflection, allow the members to pray in pairs about specific challenges or sharing or requesting forgiveness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage members to share any prayer requests or praise reports. Use Small Group Prayer and Praise Report to track prayer requests and praise reports. <p><i>Facilitator Tip: Some people are comfortable praying out loud, while others prefer to pray silently. Either is okay. The point is to connect people to God and with each other in a loving, supportive environment.</i></p>