

DISCUSSION GUIDE :: WEEK 5

STOP, COLLABORATE & LISTEN
HOLDING A GRUDGE LIKE IT'S A PAGER
MATTHEW 9:9, COLOSSIANS 3:13, MARK 11:25
10/08/2017



MAIN POINT

Overcome unforgiveness by seeing another's potential and practicing the forgiveness God has shown you.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Share a story about a time when you held a grudge that now seems silly. Why did you feel like your grudge was appropriate at the time?

Brainstorm a list of some of the reasons why it is so hard to forgive people. Which of the things on the list seem like excuses to avoid practicing forgiveness?

Every one of us has a heart prone to not forgive. We hold grudges, we build up offenses against other people, we sweep things under the rug, or we write people out of our lives forever. Rarely do we do the hard work of putting on real forgiveness, especially as a character trait that we try to model consistently. In Colossians 3, though, Paul included forgiveness in his list of godly character traits that children of God must put on, and he based that trait on the very forgiveness of God toward us, which can't be argued with.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 9:9.

Why might Jesus have had reason to hold a grudge against Matthew, or any tax collector?

Tax collectors were among the most hated people in Jesus' culture because they robbed people and used their job to their own gain. Why did Jesus welcome and spend time with people who were considered "lower" on society's scale? What is the lesson for us?

Jesus willingly and graciously spent time with the outcasts of His own society—those labeled tax collectors and sinners. What's more, Jesus was derided for these associations when Pharisees would call Him "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Matt. 11:19). Yet Jesus was pleased to be ridiculed in this way because it was part of His mission. He intentionally sought relationships with sinners in order to show them mercy, to give them Himself. He understood that God had a bigger plan for

Matthew, as He does for all people. If we are to live like Jesus “at all times,” then we will follow in His pattern here. We must look past whatever grievances we have in order to not get in the way of how God is working in a person's life.

The first step to overcoming a grudge is to see that God desires to use that person in some way. What changes when we see people through that lens?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 3:13.

What stands out to you about the phrases Paul used to describe relationships in Colossians 3:13?

What do you understand “bear with each other” to mean, and how is it connected to forgiveness? Why is bearing with someone else, despite their behavior, an essential element of forgiveness?

How does Paul’s call to forgiveness in this verse help you understand why this is an important trait for Christians to model?

When Paul calls us to accept one another, he means that Christians are to go beyond quiet resignation to forgive whatever grievances they may have against one another. Believers have been fully forgiven by Christ (Col. 2:13-14), and the forgiven are obligated to become forgivers. The standard for this forgiveness is Christ Himself.

Paul’s words to us here come in the form of a command. Why do we treat forgiveness as something we have the choice to do or not do?

What are we to do if we have a complaint with someone else? How does that stand in contrast to the way you typically respond if you have a complaint against someone?

Forgiveness does not come naturally to us. It must be taught, learned, and accepted. For Christians, we have no option but to forgive if we wish to live faithfully to Jesus Christ. However, we often think that we have the choice to not forgive. While technically this is true, unforgiveness arises from sin. We must remember that when we were sinful, God forgave us and gave Himself for us. Unforgiveness does not honor Jesus, nor your brothers and sisters in Christ.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MARK 11:25.

What does this verse teach us about the importance of forgiveness in the life of a Christian?

Why is forgiveness really a spiritual issue? What does our willingness or unwillingness to forgive reveal about our hearts?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Is there anyone in your life who you need to forgive right now, someone who needs to hear you say, "You don't owe me anymore"? What is one step you can take toward forgiving him or her?

Describe a time when you saw bitterness wreak havoc on you and a relationship in your life. What did you learn

about the importance of forgiveness through that experience?

What are some practical ways we can challenge each other to put on forgiveness in our daily lives? How can we ask people to accept the forgiveness Jesus offers if we are unforgiving as His servants?

PRAY

Thank God that He graciously gives what we cannot earn or work for. Pray that God would continually remind you of His grace, so that you may trust Him more and grow in your forgiveness of others. Pray that God would guide your actions daily, particularly as it relates to forgiving those who wrong you.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 9:9

9:9. Again Matthew showed Jesus violating a cultural taboo by associating with a tax collector. The Roman Empire's practice was to recruit tax collectors from among the people they had conquered. These natives worked for the hated oppressor. This made them traitors and outcasts among their countrymen. But it was common practice for tax collectors to demand more from their countrymen than was actually due in order to line their own pockets. If the people refused to pay, the tax collector had the threat of the Roman military to back him up. Tax collectors, in general, were known for their greed and lack of conscience, so they were thought of as the lowest form of humanity.

Not only did Jesus speak to such a vile sinner, but he invited Matthew, a tax collector, to become one of his closest followers. Implied here is the ultimate in forgiveness and unconditional acceptance. Matthew's conscience must have been in torment for him to accept the Master's invitation to spiritual cleansing and restoration, giving up the wealth and privilege of his position. Again the Messiah-King manifested the compelling authority of his word—turning the worst of sinners into disciples.

This brief passage is Matthew's only mention of himself. It is natural that he should hold up—as an exhibit in his case for the identity of Jesus as Messiah—the key turning point of his own life. Matthew placed this account at the heart of Matthew 8-10, possibly as the crowning miracle authenticating the authority of the Messiah-King. This passage also links directly with 9:1-8, because it demonstrates the king's authority to forgive sins.

COLOSSIANS 3:13

The idea of putting up with the abuses and offenses of others continues with Paul's call to bear with each other. Believers are to go beyond quiet resignation positively to forgive whatever grievances [they] may have against one another. Believers have been fully forgiven by Christ (2:13-14), and the forgiven are obligated to become forgivers. The standard for this forgiveness is Christ himself.

MARK 11:25

We know that God's will is for us to forgive as we have been forgiven. If we cannot forgive, then we are not praying in God's will.