

Chapter 4: Forgiveness

Learning Objective

The goal of this session is for couples to experience true forgiveness from God and each other, and to know how to truly forgive others. Forgiveness is a gift that God gives and should be re-gifted to others.

General Session Assignments

1. Read Chapter Four of Marriage Rx: Prescription for a radical marriage.
2. Take an account of offenses.
3. Do an offense audit.
Work on the Father Assignment and complete the Family of Origin Inventory.
4. Forgive each other from the heart.

Small Group Session One

1. **Discussion questions**
 - a. What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?
 - b. How have you experienced forgiving that led to reconciliation?
 - c. How have you experienced forgiving someone but not being reconciled to them?
 - d. How have you experienced a relationship that has the appearance of reconciliation but lacks forgiveness?
 - e. Examine areas of forgiveness in your family, church, work place, and community.
2. **Group process**
 - a. Make a list of barriers to forgiveness that have affected any members of the small group. Roughly arrange the identified barriers from toughest to easiest to deal with. Then beginning with the toughest, brainstorm strategies to overcome those barriers.
 - b. Ask for a volunteer to share about something they have been unable to forgive. Allow them to tell their story briefly.
Remind the group that an event (circumstance) can not be forgiven, but the offense contained in the event can be.
Brainstorm with the group to identify possible offenses.
Follow up with the volunteer: "Does that feel like we captured the offense?"
 - c. Offer prayer time with anyone that wishes to publicly declare what they are willing to forgive. Allow the group to act as a witness to the event.

Small Group Session Two

1. Discussion questions

- a. What was most revealing or enlightening to you from the “Family of Origin” inventory?
- b. What insights into your relationship with your spouse have you gotten from this exercise?
- c. What helps you identify offenses that need to be forgiven as distinguished from the event in which the offense occurred?

2. Group process

- a. Work together through Offense Audit, Part II: “What do I need to be forgiven for?” Brainstorm ways that you may have offended God. Each person should build their personal list of debts that apply to them. Pay particular attention to the offense(s).
- b. Walk through the Steps of Being Forgiven. Invite each person to identify an offense they would like to bring to the mercy seat. Guide them through the steps while the others agree in prayer and act as witnesses. Complete each one with the question: “Do you feel forgiven?”
- c. Brainstorm ways that you may have offended others, building your personal list of offenses. Discuss, as a group, how to apply the steps of being forgiven for these offenses against others.
- d. Work together through Offense Audit, Part I: “What do I need to forgive?” Brainstorm ways that you may have taken offense from God or others. Each person should build their personal list of debts that they are carrying.
- e. Walk through the Steps to Forgiving. Invite each person to identify an offense they would like to release, guide them through the steps while the others agree in prayer and act as witnesses. Complete each one with the question: “Do you feel like you have released the debt?”
- f. Be prepared to facilitate forgiveness between couples. Walk through the eight steps to “Forgiving Each Other from the Heart” for any issue the Holy Spirit reveals to the couple.

Small Group Session Three

1. Discussion Questions

- a. What is the church's role in helping people overcome barriers to forgiveness? (Hint: begin with prayer.)
- b. How do we reestablish the Ministry of Reconciliation according to 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 in the context of the church?

2. Group Exercise

- a. Identify and write out the steps of conflict resolution in Matthew 18:15-20. How does this list inform your behavior according to 2 Corinthians 5:16-21?
- b. Working as couples, identify any unreconciled relationships between you and someone else in your church. Pray together about what God is asking you to do in this situation. Agree together on a strategy for obeying His word.
- c. Working as couples, identify any breach between someone close to you and another person in the church. Pray together about what God is asking you to do in this situation. Agree together on a strategy for participating in this ministry of reconciliation.