

UNITED – Part 11

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TEXT

Ephesians 4:32

TALK ABOUT IT

1. When was a time you had to give forgiveness?
2. Why is forgiveness so important to life with God?
3. Where is forgiveness needed in your life this week?

LOOK TO THE WORD

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

- Read Ephesians 4:32 aloud.
 - What word or phrase stands out to you?
- Why does Paul implore his listeners to be kind and compassionate? Or to forgive?

“admit your sin to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed...” James 5:16

- Why would James ask his listeners to do something so vulnerable?
- What is the connection between “admitting your sin” and “healing”?
- What is the role of prayer in “confession and forgiveness” for the Church?

“if we freely admit that we have sinned, he is faithful to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all evil.” 1 John 1:9

- In the early Church that John was writing to, what role did “freely admitting your sin” take?
- Why is the imagery of cleansing important?

LOOK INWARD

Geoff listed what 'forgiveness is not...'

- 1) Forgiveness is not conditional.
 - 2) Forgiveness does not minimize the seriousness of the offense.
 - 3) Forgiveness is not the same as "resuming a relationship" without change.
 - 4) Forgiveness is not forgetting what happened.
 - 5) Forgiveness is not the same as condoning or excusing.
- Which of these statements stands out to you? Take the time to explain why.
 - Why is it important that forgiveness "cannot be bargained for"? What would forgiveness become if it needed to be negotiated?
 - Describe what your experience is like with forgiveness as a pathway to restored relationships. What steps are most important for you?
 - Why is it important to not minimize the offense against you, while forgiving?

Geoff also explained what Biblical forgiveness requires:

- 1) Recognize no one is perfect.
 - 2) Relinquish your right to get even.
 - 3) Respond to evil with good.
 - 4) Refocus on God's plan for *your* life.
- Which of these statements stands out to you? Take time to explain why.
 - What is required of you to acknowledge that "no one is perfect"?
 - Why do we believe "our rights" are important? What does this mean for how we follow Jesus?
 - Why is it a challenge to respond to evil with good?

LOOK OUTWARD

Geoff's last call towards Biblical forgiveness was "refocus on God's plan for your life".

- How does receiving forgiveness impact a neighbourhood or community?
- What happens when we focus on God's plan, in the midst of our community?

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves..." 1 John 1:8

- When living in community, what are some situations where forgiveness is needed?
- What happens when forgiveness isn't granted in communities (or even families)?
- What happens when forgiveness takes place, full circle, in a family/workplace/community?
- What do you do when you respond to evil with good, but nothing happens?

Geoff said, "Don't deflect, don't minimize, rationalize or justify."

- What happens to our relationships when people deflect their responsibility?
- What happens when we minimize the wrongs that have taken place in our community?
- What happens when we rationalize or justify the wrongs in our community?
- What are the steps people can take to "right size" the wrongs that have taken place and to seek forgiveness and reconciliation?

SO WHAT...

Revealing your feeling is the beginning to healing.

- Rick Warren

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Forgiveness

Take 2 minutes each day to recall: where do you feel you need to forgive? Who do you need to reach out to and ask for forgiveness? Consider the daily call to freely give and receive forgiveness.

NEVER STOP PRAYING

- Praise God for His forgiving of us
- Praise God that He forgives all who freely admit their sin and ask forgiveness
- Pray for forgiveness to flood our community
- Pray for the upcoming townhall on October 2 as our elders lead into the next ministry year
- Pray for a growing movement of community groups raising up to encourage connection, prayer and Bible reading
- Pray for those needing physical, mental, emotional and spiritual healing