



SEQUIM COMMUNITY CHURCH

EPHESIANS

SESSION 15: THE PROCESS OF LETTING GO

Ephesians 4:25-32 • March 27, 2018

“Exploring the new standards and new relationships God intends for us”

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“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” - Ephesians 4:25-29

1. According to these verses, what are the habits that destroy relationships? _____

2. What insights have you gained from this passage in handling anger? _____

• Have you ever applied this advice? _____

3. How have your attitudes, actions and thoughts changed since turning your life over to God? What have you let go of? _____

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” – Ephesians 4:30-32

4. Paul tells us not to grieve the Holy Spirit. How do these verses explain what this means?

5. Of all the commands given here for Christian living, which seems to be the major one God is challenging you with in your life? _____

Digging Deeper

For those who want to do more personal reflection on this topic.

Ephesians 4:32 talks about forgiving others. Here's a more in-depth look.

Forgiveness is...

Read through and discuss the following statements regarding forgiveness. As you read through, which of these statements is most important to you?

Forgiveness is not forgetting. People who try to forget find they cannot. God says He will remember our sins "no more" (Heb. 10:17), but God, being omniscient, cannot forget. Remember our sins "no more" means that God will never use the past against us. (Ps. 103:12). Forgetting may be the result of forgiveness, but it is never the means of forgiveness. When we bring up the past against others, we are saying we haven't forgiven them.

Forgiveness is a choice, a crisis of the will. Since God requires us to forgive, it is something we can do. But forgiveness is difficult for us because it pulls against our concept of justice. We want revenge for offenses suffered. However, we are told never to take our own revenge. (Rom. 12:19) You say, "Why should I let them off the hook?" That is precisely the problem. You are still hooked to them, still bound by your past. **You will let them off your hook, but they are never off God's.** He will deal with them fairly, something we cannot do.

You say, "You don't understand how much this person hurt me!" But don't you see, they are still hurting you! How do you stop the pain? **You don't forgive someone for their sake; you do it for your sake so you can be free.** Your need to forgive isn't an issue between you and the offender; it's between you and God.

Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person's sin. Forgiveness is costly. You pay the price of the evil you forgive. You're going to live with those consequences whether you want to or not; your only choice is whether you will do so in the bitterness of unforgiveness or the freedom of forgiveness. Jesus took the consequences of your sin upon Himself. All true forgiveness is substitutionary, because no one really forgives without bearing the consequences of the other person's sin. God the Father "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Where is the justice? It's the cross that makes forgiveness legally and morally right: "For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all" (Rom. 6:10).

How do you forgive from your heart? You acknowledge the hurt and the hate. If your forgiveness doesn't visit the emotional core of your life, it will be incomplete. Many feel the pain of interpersonal offenses, but they won't or don't know how to acknowledge it. Let God bring the pain to the surface so He can deal with it. This is where the healing takes place.

Decide that you will bear the burdens of their offenses by not using that information against them in the future. This doesn't mean that you must tolerate sin; you must always take a stand against sin. When someone sins against us we are to go to them and let them know about it with the goal to bring repentance and reconciliation.

(See Luke 17:3)

Don't wait to forgive until you feel like forgiving; you will never get there. Feelings take time to heal after the choice to forgive is made and Satan has lost his place (Eph. 4:26-27). **Freedom is what will be gained, not a feeling.**

As you pray, God may bring to mind offending people and experiences you have totally forgotten. Let Him do it even if it is painful. Remember, you are doing this for your sake. God wants you to be free. Don't rationalize or explain the offender's behavior. Forgiveness is dealing with your pain and leaving the other person to God. Positive feelings will follow in time; freeing yourself from the past is the critical issue right now.

Don't say, "Lord, please help me to forgive," because He is already helping you. Don't say, "Lord, I want to forgive," because you are bypassing the hard-core choice to forgive which is your responsibility. Stay with each individual until you are sure you have dealt with all the remembered pain - what they did, how they hurt you, how they made you feel (rejected, unloved, unworthy, dirty, etc.).

There are times when we forgive others when repentance is not present, but ideally reconciliation should be the goal of forgiveness. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

Five Definitions of Forgiveness

1. Forgiveness is me wiping the slate clean. Ephesians 4:32
2. Forgiveness is a positive attitude toward the offense rather than a negative attitude toward the one who hurt you. Genesis 45:4-8
3. Forgiveness is viewing the one who hurt you as a tool in the hands of God to make you into the man or woman of God He intends you to be. 1 Peter 3:8-14
4. Forgiveness uses the pain of the offense to alert us to the needs of the offender. Luke 6:27-36
5. Forgiveness recognizes that bitterness is assuming a right God never gave you. Romans 12:19-21