

It's Time to Break Out of Prison: Forgiveness

Small Group Discussion Questions

The sermon uses the image of being in a "prison of sin" and says the key out of that prison is shaped like the cross. How does understanding how much God has forgiven you affect your willingness to forgive others?

In [Matthew 18:21-22](#), Peter asks if he should forgive seven times — This was already generous by rabbinic standards. Jesus answers "seventy times seven." Why do you think we tend to put a limit on forgiveness, even when we know Jesus' teaching?

The parable describes a servant who owed "millions of dollars" (ten thousand talents) — an unpayable debt — and was forgiven completely. He then chokes a fellow servant who owes him "a few thousand dollars" (a denarius). Where do you see yourself in this story? Have you ever been the forgiven servant who forgot how much you'd been forgiven?

"Being unwilling to forgive makes you a prisoner to the past." How have you seen unforgiveness hold someone — maybe even yourself — captive emotionally, spiritually, or relationally?

The sermon quotes Andy Stanley: *"In the shadow of my hurt, forgiveness feels like a decision to reward my enemy. But in the shadow of the cross, forgiveness is merely a gift from one undeserving soul to another."*

What does it mean to live "in the shadow of my hurt" when it comes to forgiveness?

What does it mean to live "in the shadow of the cross" when it comes to forgiveness?

What's the difference between head-forgiveness and heart-forgiveness?

Why is the heart part so much harder?

Not forgiving is like bringing the stinking trash back into the house and wondering why it smells.

What does it look like practically to "take the garbage outside and leave it there"?

Unforgiveness is like "drinking poison and thinking it will affect" the person who hurt you.

Have you experienced the truth of that — where holding onto bitterness hurt you more than it hurt the other person?

We defined what forgiveness is NOT: it's not letting someone off the hook, and it's not acting like it never happened. [Romans 12:19](#) says to leave justice to God.

Why is it important to understand these distinctions?

What happens when we confuse forgiveness with pretending?

Forgiveness IS described as "deciding not to seek revenge" and "deciding not to rejoice when they fail." [Proverbs 24:17](#) and [Matthew 5:44](#) are both cited. Which of those two — not seeking revenge or not celebrating someone's failure — is harder for you?

"Forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves, not a gift we give to the one who hurts us." How does reframing forgiveness this way change your understanding of what God is asking you to do?

Closing prayer "God, put in me Your heart of forgiveness because my heart is struggling to forgive." Is there someone — a specific person or situation — where you need to pray that prayer this week? What would it take for you to begin that process honestly before God?