

As We Forgive Those
Real Life Catholic Study Series

Episode I

Introduction

It is clear all throughout Scripture that we must forgive. God's forgiveness of us depends on our willingness to forgive others. But let's be clear from the outset, that is no easy task. It is not a one-time decision that you will make and then be free and clear of the trouble of it. No, forgiveness is a *process*. It's not a thing we do, but rather a frame of mind we come to through the work of grace. Notice the "work of grace." True forgiveness goes contrary to our broken human nature. In our humanity we cling to self-protection and self-preservation. Yet the call of the Gospel invites us to a better way. That way involves letting go rather than clinging, releasing rather than holding on, surrendering rather than protecting ourselves, and dying rather than trying to preserve our lives.

This is what this series is all about. Our part is the letting go, deciding to forgive despite what our heart "feels." Unfortunately, that decision will need to be made over and over and over again. Eventually, the grace will take over and the human effort will diminish; you will find yourself one day not "feeling" the same way toward that person or situation. It's a mystery, and it takes time. As you begin this series, that is the invitation. What will be laid out here is the path to this kind of freedom; it's a path we all need to walk on, but in the end only God can bring it.

Key Scripture verse

Luke 6:37-38: "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

Short Summary of the Episode

In this first episode, Chris offers some compelling quotes about the "poison" of unforgiveness. Holding on to bitterness and resentment is like giving up real estate in our minds to those who have offended us. Why would we do that? When we live with unforgiveness, it robs us of the present moment, of being aware of the blessings all around us. It can even make us sick.

Yet, authentic forgiveness cannot happen without first acknowledging how we have been hurt. There can be tendencies in us to downplay hurts and offenses, almost a failure to truly acknowledge them. For some, this is a type of defense mechanism to prevent further hurt. For others, it could be an over-spiritualization of our day-to-day experience of life and relationships.

No matter what the reasons, we need to guard against any unhealthy ways we might approach forgiveness. Chris lays out some human tendencies we may encounter – ways that we are misunderstanding what true forgiveness is; what he explains forgiveness is NOT.

What forgiveness IS, is our decision to let.stuff.go. Someone else owes us a debt (of justice), and we make the free and clear decision to forgive the debt.

-Watch first video-

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. As I begin this study, am I aware of any areas of unforgiveness in my heart – things from my past or present? (No need to focus right now into all the details, just an awareness and acknowledgement of what is there)

1. Do I have any tendencies toward the things that forgiveness is NOT?
 - Making excuses for someone else's wrong
 - Making light of ways I have been wronged
 - Not drawing healthy boundaries for myself? (Again, just an awareness right now of tendencies, not drilling into all the depth of it)

1. Group Reflection: There's a moment in this first episode where Chris states that forgiveness is "Letting.Stuff.Go" – it's a palpable moment. Take a couple moments as a group to sit with that statement in silence. Let it sink in deep. Let the words wash over you. What is the Lord inviting you to let go?

1. What are one (or two or three) things I hope to "let go" over the course of this study?

Take some time now as a group to pray together for the work of grace that is such a critical part of this process. We all need the grace to decide to forgive, to decide to let go. But God is necessary for all the rest of the transformation that is necessary – our feelings, our memories,

|
as we forgive those...
|

etc. Grace is a part of both sides of that equation. Pray for that work of grace and pray for each other. Have each person in the group say a pray for the person to their right to end your first gathering.