



Week 4
LIVE
Give Forgiveness

LIKE YOU WERE

DYING

TM

No Records of Wrongs

Live Like You Were Dying (song) ***“.....and I gave forgiveness I’d been denying”***

Those seven words from that song are definitely worth pondering.

What causes us to deny forgiveness?

Revenge. When you have been hurt deeply, the natural human response is to want the person who hurt you to go through an equal amount of suffering. Even the Old Testament law referred to this.

Exodus 21:23-25

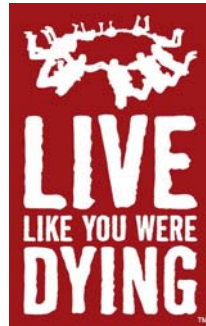
“But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.” (NIV)

Wow, justice is sometimes really cold and scary! But thanks be to God that He extends grace which is the opposite of revenge. Grace exchanges revenge with forgiveness.

1 Peter 2:23

“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”

God knows that if all of us were to receive just payment for our sins that would be the end of the human race. Because He has forgiven us, He now expects us to forgive others. It’s a remarkable turn of events but it’s the only way that healing and restoration can take place in our relationships.



Notes—Week 4 Give Forgiveness

Denying forgiveness sets up a pattern in our life that will keep us from the healing that is available from God. Consider the beggar in John 5:6.

John 5:5-7

“One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

The beggar was so used to his hurt that it became his identity. He immediately responded to Jesus with an excuse. Some of us have been so identified with our anger or fear that we also offer God an excuse about not extending the forgiveness that He has given us.

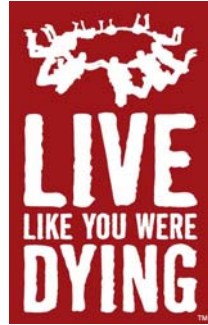
Dying puts a real crimp in anyone’s desire for retribution! Live like you were dying cuts through the diversions and excuses of life. The Apostle Paul was correct when he said, “Love keeps no record of wrong.” (1 Corinthians 13:5.)

Can life really be that simple? Forgiveness is the only way that the wars in our life will end. Stop being a scorekeeper and throw away the scorecard. The unforgiving heart not only hurts others but hurts the one who owns it...live like you were dying.



Why Not Forgive?

What do we gain by not forgiving? Have you ever really thought about that? Most of the time we are not really aware of the lack of forgiveness we harbor. Our natural response, in our sinful nature, is revenge. Let's think about it for a minute.



Withholding forgiveness probably comes from the desire for justice. Justice is a good thing. Without justice there would be murderers on the streets and survival of the fittest. So, if someone hurts us refusing to forgive them is just giving them what they deserve. It is logical, right? We are just helping God out by showing them their unrighteous behavior. *“Teaching them a lesson will help them grow in their walk with God!”* *“A person reaps what they sow.”* Forgiveness shouldn't apply in every situation, right?

The problem with this line of thought is that God is the only one capable of being a fair and impartial judge. When we do not extend forgiveness we are carrying out our own agenda, not God's. If we hold a grudge, so what? But God recognizes that when we hold grudges against someone we are, in fact, not moving forward with God. We think we are punishing someone else when, in fact, we are in our own prison. God is trying to free us!

Romans 12:17-19 “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.”

5. Who have you been denying forgiveness and what is keeping you from giving it? To help you rediscover the answer here are some questions to ponder.
- Who would your wife, kids, and best friends say that you need to forgive?
 - Who do you feel anger and resentment toward when their name comes up?
 - Who are you talking about more than you are talking to?
 - When the topic of forgiveness comes up, whose name immediately pops into your mind?

Live It Out

1. As a group, pray for those needing reconciliation. Ask the Lord to direct you in the timing and approach to conversations that need to take place.
2. Call, e-mail, or text message the person you need to reconcile with. Have the group hold you accountable.
3. Live Like YOU Were Dying!



HomeTeam Study

Week 4—Give Forgiveness

Before the Video

1. OK, what are you going to do that you have never done before?

Watch Video

Talk it Over

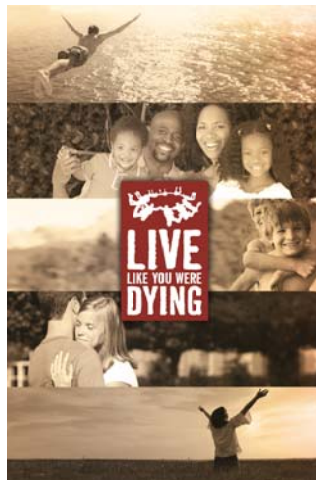
1. What did Gary Smalley say in this last video teaching that grabbed you the most?
2. Can you remember when someone forgave you and let you off the hook? What does that relationship look like today?
3. **Read** Colossians 3:12-13

What are some practical ways that you can forgive other's faults?

Have someone PRAY and praise God for His deep extravagant love for us.

4. **READ** Ephesians 4:31-32

Read this again. What words in verse 31 most jump out at you? What is the antidote in verse 32?



Justice will be done, but not by our hand.

Matthew 6:14-15 ***“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”***

Do you want God to treat you the way you treat others? Or do you want the mercy of God instead? Choosing God's justice instead of His forgiveness is insane, but that is what we are doing when we live with a revengeful heart.

God is merciful to us and wants us to be merciful to others. We can't have it both ways. That is the heart of Jesus.

Luke 6:35-36

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”



The Power of Forgiveness

We just went through Easter and saw what the power of forgiveness can do. While hanging on the cross Jesus' words continue to echo in our lives.

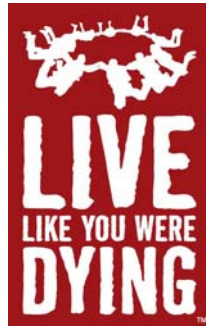
Luke 23:34

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (NIV)

It's hard to imagine a more demanding circumstance for forgiveness to be offered, yet Christ gives us this model. It is a high standard that He has set for those He calls "Christ Ones."

A current example of unusual forgiveness was set in motion on April 16, 2007, when a twenty-three-year-old Virginia Tech student coldly and methodically took the lives of thirty-two of his classmates before turning the gun on himself. As the events were reported and interpreted, conflicting opinions surfaced about how many died that day. Was it thirty-two or thirty-three? Those who said thirty-two refused to place any value on the life of someone who would do such a thing. He was an animal or a demon—short of being human and unworthy of being given the same value as the lives he took. Those who said thirty-three saw the shooter as a person with value as well, a deeply disturbed person with no friends but still created in the image of God. The difference between these views has huge implications on forgiveness.

An alumnus of Virginia Tech reported it was clear that those who planned an on-campus memorial to the victims



Mark 13:33

"Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come."

2. Live with no regrets—no unfinished business.

Philippians 3:13-14

"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Michael doesn't look back. He is more interested in discovering the "what's now" of the present and the future than the "why's" of the past. Michael has no regrets because he knows that there is a reason behind everything and God will reveal it at some point, either in this life or the next.

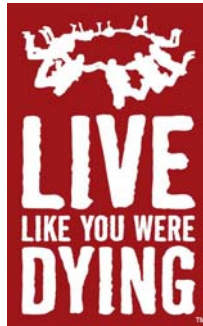
3. Love with urgency

Michael doesn't hesitate to express his love in any form. I would take this to mean that he shares his love for his mom in words, in deeds, in remembering what is important to her, in sending her notes and reminders of his love, in listening when she needs to talk, and taking her places she loves. Finally, Michael's love for his mother spills out on everyone else too. Michael lives like he is dying.



Living Like You Were Dying

As we come to the end of this 30-day journey, we conclude with some thoughts from a young man whose life, even at only twenty years, resonates with the source of our study.



Michael Simon believes that the song, “Live Like You Were Dying” is sort of a theme song for him. ***“I grab life by the horns and don’t let go—seizing the day and squeezing the life out of it for all it is worth. Because of my mother’s nine-year battle with breast cancer, I don’t really take time for granted. I don’t leave questions unasked and don’t hesitate to express love in any form.”***

Here is a young man who has lived for the last nine years considering each day in the company of his mother to be his last. Three things he brings up here are significant conclusions for our study.

1. Make the most of every moment. It may be the last.

As we have seen, time is a precious commodity. Michael realizes that and spends it wisely and passionately. He is acutely aware of time passing, and each new day he has with his mother is a blessing. And this has been going on for nine years! His example gives a realistic picture of what living like you were dying can actually do for you. It forces you not to take anything for granted but to be thankful in all things. It makes you alert to every person and circumstance. Jesus spoke of this mindset.

intended to mourn the death of thirty-three people by putting out as many stones in memory of each life.

“Memorabilia was left at each stone for the respective persons,” he wrote, “even the shooter.”

This is an extraordinary inclusion. Those who advocate such quick forgiveness must have experienced the alternative in the past. The only result of withholding forgiveness is one of anger, resentment, and bitterness that can eat away at a person and leave them without the ability to extend kindness or grace.

By forgiving, you take away that person’s power over you. You turn things back to God and trust Him for justice. There is no healing of wrong done to us apart from forgiveness.

Jesus was speaking to us when He said, ***“Forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”***

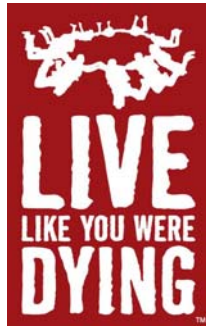
Ephesians 4:32

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”



Making Peace

Do you remember the time when someone you loved died? When I was ten years old, my father died and at times it still feels as real today as it did then. I remember I felt like I should have done something to prevent it from happening. Since I was in school when it happened, I was not able to say goodbye and this was the hardest thing.



Most people won't admit when they are angry at God, but it happens at times. God has much experience in handling our anger. I thought God was angry with me for being angry with Him, but my image of God was wrong.

Things began to change when my brother gave me a necklace just before he left for the army. It had a medallion on it with the words from the Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr:

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; Courage to change the things I can; And wisdom to know the difference.”

This prayer was the beginning of my desire to know God. This prayer caused me to search Him out and discover the tremendous love that He has for me. I found a God who turned my life, that was overwhelmed with death, into a “new life.” I had let go of the past in order to see the present.

Forgiveness is all about letting go. Those who don't forgive are the ones who find themselves mired in their own hostility and blame, headed for the very thing they hate. Forgive-

ness becomes for us a sign of relief—a newfound freedom.

The Serenity Prayer didn't end with the little that was written on my medallion. Years later, I discovered that there was more to it. I think it is appropriate for this study.

***“Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
As it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
If I surrender to His will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.”*** Amen

This is the essence of forgiveness: surrender of our expectations, our rights, and our pride to God's will; giving Him control in our lives and trusting that He has our best in mind in all circumstances.

Some of you are trapped in the hold of a particularly helpless form of un-forgiveness, because the person you are unwilling to forgive is no longer alive. How do you find peace when you cannot go to them? God can release you. In fact, He already has. Step into the freedom of God's forgiveness.

Luke 4:18-19 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

