From Forgiveness to Blessing
Session 1C
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Forgiveness is not just mercy. Forgiveness has to do with where an injury has been done.

To forgive means to release the _____ to pay back.

I don't stop _____.

- Often where forgiveness is appropriate you see people wanting the person to stop hurting because it makes them feel guilty and they'd like to not feel guilty any longer…so they want this person that they've injured to stop hurting.
- Don't try to stop hurting.
- You can decide not to pay back and with God's help you can carry through with it.

Forgiveness does not mean to _____.

Forgiveness does not mean that I behave toward the person, that I forgive, just as I did before they did what was _____.

- I now know more about what they're like and it's not wise for me to enter into that kind of relationship with them and I wouldn't recommend to anyone else.

Those three things are so important!

KEY QUESTION: Am I doing this to make them _____ because of what they did to me?
If you're doing it to make them suffer because of what they did to you, that's unforgiveness. If you're not, it's not.

AUDIENCE COMMENT: Referencing Corrie ten Boom's story shared in November 1972, where she was speaking at a church on the topic of forgiveness…*(consider pausing the video to read her story, following, if you're not already familiar with it)*

And that's when I saw him, working his way forward against the others. One moment I saw the overcoat and the brown hat; the next, a blue uniform and a visored cap with its skull and crossbones. It came back with a rush: the huge room with its harsh overhead lights, the pathetic pile of dresses and shoes in the center of the floor, the shame of walking naked past this man. I could see my sister's frail form ahead of me, ribs sharp beneath the parchment skin. Betsie, how thin you were! Betsie and I had been arrested for concealing Jews in our home during the Nazi occupation of Holland; this man had been a guard at Ravensbrück concentration camp where we were sent.

Now he was in front of me, hand thrust out: "A fine message, fräulein! How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!" And I, who had spoken so glibly of forgiveness, fumbled in my pocketbook rather than take that hand. He would not remember me, of course–how could he remember one prisoner among those thousands of women? But I remembered him and the leather crop swinging from his belt. It was the first time since my release that I had been face to face with one of my captors and my blood seemed to freeze. "You mentioned Ravensbrück in your talk," he was saying. "I was a guard in there." No, he did not remember me.

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"But since that time," he went on, "I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fräulein"–again the hand came out–"will you forgive me?"

And I stood there–I whose sins had every day to be forgiven–and could not. Betsie had died in that place–could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking? It could not have been many seconds that he stood there, hand held out, but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do. For I had to do it–I knew that. The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. "If you do not forgive men their trespasses," Jesus says, "neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."
I knew it not only as a commandment of God, but as a daily experience. Since the end of the war I had had a home in Holland for victims of Nazi brutality. Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were able also to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids. It was as simple and as horrible as that.

And still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion–I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. *"Jesus, help me!" I prayed silently. "I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling."* And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. "I forgive you, brother!" I cried. "With all my heart!"

- It's in the act that we know the power of God to accomplish it.
- You do what you can to bring to pass the power of God flowing through you; it is a miracle.
- That's the kind of life we're supposed to be leading: a life out of the _____.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Regarding forgiving oneself…
DALLAS: Many people think they haven't forgiven themselves for something if they still regret it.

Regretting something is not the same as unforgiveness. To not forgive yourself is a matter of inflicting _____ upon yourself for what you've done in the past.

REMINDER:

1. To forgive doesn't mean that you stop hurting.
2. To forgive doesn't mean that you forget.
3. To forgive does not mean that you treat the person exactly in the same way that you treated them before they injured you or did wrong.

➢ You can apply all of that to yourself.

Once you figure out how you can fail, stay out of the temptation from there on. Deal with the issue.

Unforgiveness is about punishing people for what they've done. Sometimes that means bringing it up over and over!

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AUDIENCE COMMENT: What was stopping me from forgiving them was the feeling that I thought I had to stay in the relationship….
DALLAS: Forgiveness doesn't mean you'll treat them as you did before they wronged you. You can't sever the relationship. You can change it, but you can't sever it.
You _____ it appropriately and that is wisdom.

AUDIENCE COMMENT: You can't keep the birds of air from flying overhead but you can keep them from not building a nest in your beard.
DALLAS: If you are forgiving you will just shoo them on. Not welcome them, not brood over them; you have to decide not to dwell on them.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Re: in childhood, little children taught to say sorry, ask forgiveness, hug and go on.
DALLAS: What happens is, parents want a behavioral outcome, and they force it and turn it into a legalism which means you can go through the routine and not forgive. Or you can forgive and not go thru the routine. We do need a certain level of behavior but that doesn't help us on the inside. It leads to a lot of hypocrisy and pretense.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Re: training young children not to beat up their brother…?
DALLAS: You have to *make sure* that you don't try to make them _____ something.
It will make them want to pretend, and they will continue to boil on the inside.

You might teach them particular strategies about behavior:

- Give time to the child. Be a buffer. Give them time.
- Teach them how to respond.
- Teach them the futility of getting involved in punishing behaviors…
- Involve them in a conspiracy of kindness towards their sibling.
- Get the child learning to overcome evil with good.

Requires teaching, as that's conceptual. A lot of what we do as Christians is conceptual work! Legalism forces us into screwy thinking. That means thinking that does not work, that is not connected to reality. The conceptualization has to be right: why are we doing something good here?

- Grace. Mercy. Let them know how often they've received mercy. Enjoy mercy.
- The joy that comes from blessing others. Lead them into the experience of it.

Spiritual things are learned by _____.

- You have to establish a context of peace. That may involve making sure you have enough time, that you get enough sleep.

It isn't impossible to love your enemies! It's easier to _____ your enemies than it is to hate them.
We have to teach people how to move into this. But you have to know where to get the love. It is much easier to love your enemies than it is to hate them.