

Freedom Groups Facilitator's Guide

For The "FORGIVENESS" Study Guide

Foundation Information:

1. Freedom Groups were created so that we could share with, learn from and support each other as we each walk on our personal journeys to freedom together.
2. We all face issues in our lives that tend to become roadblocks to us moving freely into our future.
3. Unforgiveness is one of the major roadblocks that can keep us from moving forward and keeps us trapped by our past.
4. Most people know the need to forgive, but most people also struggle to do it.
5. When we hear of the struggles of others and how they overcome or pushed past those struggles it helps us deal with our own.
6. This is especially true of forgiveness because it can be so hard and it is unnatural to forgive.
7. We have to commit ourselves to forgive as we follow Christ who forgave us.
8. Over time it becomes easier and easier to forgive. People need to hear that. This is why sharing our own stories of struggling to forgive, God helping us to do so, and the freedom and blessing that follow is so important.
9. So please share how God helped you to forgive yourself or others and the blessings and freedom and have come from that.

The Meeting:

I. Introductions/Ice Breaker: (15 minutes)

Welcome everyone.

Remember: If you have anyone new, we do not want to single them out and make them feel out of place, but we do want them to feel welcome as part of the group. So take special care of welcome them and have everyone in the group introduce themselves, not just the new people/person.

Ask how everyone's week was and allow a few minutes for sharing.

Then ask one, two or all three of the WARM-UP questions on page one of the FORGIVENESS study guide.

II. The Study: FORGIVENESS (30 minutes)

Share with the group, *"In last week's study we looked at one of the difficult teaching of Jesus where He told us to love our enemies. In that study we learned that Scripture teaches us to do good to people, to bless them and to forgive. Jesus said we are to do these things to everyone,*

not just those who are nice to us. Anyone can do that. Instead we are to do good to, to bless and to forgive even our enemies.

In today's world when we say the word "enemies" our minds often goes to Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Iran or North Korea. But Jesus was not talking just about those types of enemies. In fact, these types of enemies can be relatively easy to forgive if we have not personally be wronged directly by them. Jesus is talking about this type of enemy for sure, but He is also talking about our up-close-and-personal enemies. Enemies like the person who deeply hurt you, the one who broke your trust, the person who always told you that you would not amount to anything, the one who beat you down, the one who abused you or the one who betrayed you. Yes, these up-close-and-personal enemies are the ones Jesus was especially talking about because they are the ones that are so hard to be good to, to bless and to forgive.

The hardest of these three things ... do go to, to bless and to forgive ... probably is the forgiveness part. It is easier to muster up the strength for the moment to say something nice to someone who has wronged us. It is easier even to push past the hurt and do something that might be nice towards them. These things only take a few minutes of biting our tongues or forcing our tongues to say something polite. The hardest of these three challenges in loving our enemies is to forgive. Forgiveness forces us deal long term with the hurt, anger, bad feelings and the bitterness. Forgiveness can be hard.

Yet, as last week's lesson pointed out, Jesus' teachings were not simply meant to be hard on us, but His teachings are actually meant to set us free. Jesus wants us to be free from the pain and failures of the past so that we can move on to the good future He has in store for us.

In today's lesson we will look a little deeper at the issue of forgiveness... forgiving our enemies and forgiving ourselves."

Facilitate your group's discussion by going through the study guide.

- Start with reading the WORD section;
- do section 1, reading the Scripture and question
- do section 2, reading the Scripture and question
- do section 3, reading the Scripture and question

III. Application: (10 minutes)

Then ask 1, 2, or all 3 of the questions in the APPLICATION section of the study and discuss.

IV. The Challenge and Prayer (5 minutes)

Lead your group in praying using the PRAYER section as a guide.

Remind them of your next meeting time and place and then dismiss on time.

Thank you facilitators for the difference you are making in the lives of others!