

# LifeGroup Study

**Date: October 1, 2023**

**Text: Genesis 50:15-21, Matthew 18:21-35**

**Theme: Believing Is Seeing!  
Mirror of Forgiveness**

## Belong

Forgiveness. Have you ever taken time to really think about what it means? Whether it's a concept or a feeling or even an obligation? Jesus, knowing how important forgiveness is, included it in the prayer he taught us by teaching us to ask God to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Webster's dictionary defines forgiveness as an action, as in the act of forgiving and the word forgive as "to cease to feel resentment against an offender" which makes forgiveness the act of ceasing to feel resentment toward another person. That can be difficult at times.

Each of us has felt resentment or anger toward another person when we've felt we've been wronged. When the wrong is something that is not too serious, we can quickly let go of those negative feelings and restore the relationship. There are also times when the wrong is something so unfathomable that the anger and resentment is so deep within us that we can't move beyond it. The feelings start to eat away at us and become so strong that they start to motivate our behavior even sometimes to the point where they become all consuming, limiting our ability to live life.

Jesus is well aware of the trespasses we inflict on each other and encourages us to do the very thing that can be extremely difficult—to forgive. The texts from Genesis and Matthew help us understand forgiveness not as an obligation or duty but as life-giving.

**Prayer...** Heavenly Father, you have taught us to forgive one another, yet we still hold on to the resentment, anger, and hurt when we've been wronged. We ask for your help and guidance to realize and understand how forgiveness frees us and is life-giving. Amen.

## Believe

**Read Genesis 50:15-21.** This passage finds Joseph facing his brothers shortly after the death of their father, Jacob. You have to wonder what was going through Joseph's mind as he recalled how close he was to his father when he lived in the land of Canaan and how happy they were. He must have started to think how all that was taken away from him when his brothers, through their own jealousy, sold him into slavery which ultimately sent him to be imprisoned in Egypt.

•*How do you think you would have reacted if you were Joseph?*

You would think resentment and anger would have started to bubble up within Joseph. And yet, when Joseph heard his father's words encouraging him to forgive his brothers, he began to weep at the possibility of reconciliation with his family. When they came

together Joseph welcomed them all with open arms.

- Why did Joseph forgive his brothers?*
- How was God active in Joseph's forgiveness?*

**Read Matthew 18:21-35.** The text opens with a simple question from Peter about how many times he should forgive someone. Have you ever wondered that? As a Jew, Peter would have been taught that three times was enough. Jesus' answer would most likely have surprised and confused Peter when he said that Peter should forgive someone seventy-seven times.

•*Do you think Jesus meant for us to keep track of how many times we forgive someone or is there something deeper going on?*

Jesus uses Peter's question about forgiveness as an opportunity to go beyond simply answering the question to teach about the kingdom of heaven through a parable.

- How will God treat us if we don't forgive?*
- Do you think God's forgiveness is conditional?*
- How do you think this relates to the kingdom of heaven?*

We lose our ability to love when we allow resentment and anger to fester inside of us, which isolates us and moves us away from our connection with God. Forgiveness allows us to let go of the resentment that traps us and allows us to open ourselves up to loving others.

- How does holding on to resentment impact our lives?*
- How have you felt when you were able to forgive someone?*
- How did you feel when you have been forgiven for something?*
- How does God forgiving us allow us to forgive others?*

## Become

God knows us so completely that God is aware of how we can allow resentment and anger to motivate our actions toward retribution and revenge when we've been wronged. God also knows how destructive that can be for us as we become consumed with a desire to get even, not allowing much room for anything else in our lives. God's desire for us to forgive each other isn't out of obligation or duty but to restore ourselves by letting go of the resentment and anger that prevents us from realizing life. God helps us by showing us forgiveness and encouraging us to mirror God's forgiveness of us with each other. God does this so that we may once again realize God's love for us and the life-giving love God has placed within us.

**Prayer...** Lord God, we realize that when we allow resentment, anger, and hurt to motivate us we move away from you and away from the life you desire for us. We are grateful for your patience and the forgiveness you show us because it allows us to build forgiving hearts so that we are better able to experience the life you intended and be active parts of your unfolding kingdom. Amen.



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