

UNITED

FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

Reading: Ephesians 4:30-32

Biblical forgiveness is hard. It deals with sin and often is very painful. Our God of love wants us to forgive not because it always feels the best right now, but because it brings the most glory to Him and is best for us. Knowing it is emotionally hard, especially when dealing with grievous sin, we should still take it very seriously and pursue forgiveness often. If we do not we will not be a unified body worshipping Jesus. Biblical forgiveness does not look like, "Hey, I didn't mean to do that." with the other responding, "Yeah no worries, not a big deal." This sad version of forgiveness does not restore anyone to Jesus, bring healing nor promote unity in the body. It is passive, allowing sin to go undealt with and opening the door to all kinds of further consuming sin (see Eph. 4:31).

Jesus gives us a kind of forgiveness that defies reason and worldly wisdom and is impossible to achieve on our own. Most of us understand the start of forgiveness which is releasing someone who hurts us from the desire to punish them. Jesus forgiveness goes ten steps further and adds to it the desire to treat the transgressor with favor, joy and love! Biblical forgiveness wants to pardon their sin against us and be overcome with joy as they confess and repent. Jesus' forgiveness is impossible on our own because it is only achieved in the Holy Spirit's power through the Gospel.

We can forgive because the sin against us (though it is painful, terrible and wrong) is ultimately against God. We can forgive because God favors us as His children and shows unmerited forgiveness to us. Our forgiveness is focused on Jesus and not our mustered up effort to ignore and overcome sin. As we truly forgive those who've hurt us, our friends and city will see the power of God and want to know more. Forgiving one another is a part of our mission.

Questions:

- 1 What makes forgiving one another possible?
- 2 How do the process of forgiveness usually play out in your life? How is the different from the biblical model of forgiveness?
- 3 Have you ever experienced biblical forgiveness? How did it affect you?
- 4 What is the meaning of the phrase, "The Gospel is our foundation for forgiveness?" How does this practically apply in our lives?
- 5 What makes joy in forgiveness hard and how can we encourage one another to fight for it?
- 6 Does seeing sin as a violation against God help you to forgive? Please explain.
- 7 Why is forgiveness vital to our mission?