
A CHURCH OF FORGIVERS

STUDY NOTES FOR CARE GROUPS - (EPHESIANS 4:32)

The following are resource questions that you can use with your Care Group for discussion. They are based on the sermon preached on Sunday, November 29, 2009, by Pastor Arnold Wong at the Grace Baptist Church, Singapore. The sermon is available online at <http://www.gracebap.org.sg/worship/series.html>.

November 29, 2009

Context:

Identity and Actions inseparably go together. From the earliest days of our childhood, our actions are linked to our identity. Throughout our life, from beginning to end, our identity is linked to our actions. Who we are affects how we should act. This is the basic principle of life to which Paul appeals to in Ephesians chapter 4. In the first three chapters, he said, "You are a child of God." Now, in the fourth chapter, he is saying, "Act like one."

"Christians are people who are drawn together because they owe a common debt to the goodness and grace of God." William Barclay.

I. It is important to understand forgiveness from the human point of view.

Scenarios:

#1 Offender realizes the fault and apologizes and offers to make restitution

#2 Offender doesn't know about the offense and therefore the offended person goes to him and reveal the offense

II. It is more important to understand forgiveness from God's point of view:

GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO FORGIVE LIKE HE DID.

- Christians are called to show the love of God and to deny any opportunity to ill-feeling and resentment (Ephesians 4:32). They must show kindness, an attitude of concern for each other's well-being. This reflects the nature of God Himself, who has already been described as 'kind' in Ephesians 4:27. Their attitude must be one of compassion, the ability to feel for others; and above all, it must be one of forgiveness.

GOD SEES TIMES FOR UNCONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS.

- Sometimes in the New Testament, being forgiving is seen as necessary for receiving God's forgiveness (see Matthew 6:14-15). At other times, as here, Christian forgiveness is a reflection of the forgiveness that has already been received from God. Perhaps the two go together. Those who know their need of

forgiveness are more likely to be forgiving themselves, and so are open to God's forgiveness. Similarly, having received forgiveness, they are more likely to recognize the need to forgive others.

GOD SEES TIMES FOR CONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS.

- When a fellow believer is living in sin, forgiveness is available on the condition that the person stops his or her sinful acts. True forgiveness is always reconciliatory and not punitive. Therefore, to help the person who had committed sin to change and come back into a relationship with the church and ultimately with God.

III. Some Lessons Learned About Forgiveness:

FORGIVENESS DOES NOT REQUIRES US TO...

- ...forget (Isa 43); for only God can do that.
- ...pretend that it didn't happen.
- ...accept / condone the offense.
- ...immediately trust the offender.

FORGIVENESS IS ABOUT...

- ...releasing that person to God.
- ...realizing that you have forgiven by faith.
- ...re-committing yourself to obey God and trust Him to heal you.

Reflection and Discussion:

Christians should show in their lives the nature of God Himself. Like children mimicking their parents, they should imitate God (Ephesians 5:1), seeking to show family likeness – the underlying theme is a call to become in practice what they are in fact – and what they will be; for all eternity. What paralyzes the church is the inability to forgive and move on.

1. What is your attitude toward others who has offended or hurt you?

2. What is the quality of your relationships with fellow believers?

3. Would they describe you as caring, sympathetic and kind to fellow Christians?

End of Study.