

March 19, 2023 – Small Group Leader's Guide
Read Matthew 6:9-15

1. Why is it difficult to forgive someone?

Forgiving someone means giving up something more for the person who did us wrong. Forgiving them means we give up our right, our entitlement to justice, our power over them for their sake. It almost means double the loss, double the cost. It's costly for the person who was already harmed to forgive.

2. In the sermon, Orvin described forgiveness as "making space" for the person who did wrong. How does forgiveness "make space" for the offender?

Forgiving the person gives room and time for the offender to acknowledge their own sin, admit their wrong, confess and repent, and then to willingly accept the consequences. It grants them the dignity and the voice to respond to what they've done, rather than simply punishing them immediately.

3. Discuss the ways forgiveness has been abused or misused as a weapon of oppression or subjugation, even in the institutional church. What is true forgiveness and what is false forgiveness?

The discussion may bring up very sensitive and divisive issues related to politics, hot button social topics, and personal experiences of abuse and violence. Allow space for anyone to share and to listen. True forgiveness frees the victim from incessant outrage, anger, and vindictiveness against their perpetrator. It does not mean that the crime done was okay, or that it is forgotten, or that there's reconciliation, restoration, or restitution. False forgiveness perpetuates a system and cycle of abuse, injustice, and inequality, sweeping crimes under the rug, allowing perpetrators to go on sinning without consequence.

4. How does the cross of Jesus Christ shape and motivate our Christian obligation to forgive?

The cross shapes our Christian forgiveness. Jesus' suffering and sacrifice on the cross models for Christians the cost and sacrifice that we willingly must bear for others who have wronged us, not so that we become doormats and allow injustice to continue, but rather to offer the same grace and mercy we've received from God towards others who are as undeserving as we are.