



PART ONE:

**The
SHOCKING
REVELATION
About FORGIVENESS**

SESSION 2
Five Requirements for
Lasting Forgiveness

Open Your Heart

WHAT GOD SAYS

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” Revelation 3:20

On one occasion, Jesus was seeking to have deep communion with a group of people He loved, but was prevented from doing so because the doors of their hearts were closed. To gain entrance, the Savior asked them to “open the door” of their hearts. This loving request from Jesus reveals the same concept in Matthew 18 when Jesus reveals we must forgive “from our hearts.”

Each of our hearts has a door that can remain tightly shut or swing wide-open. Our struggle at times is knowing when to securely fasten the door, and when to turn the knob and open it.

Preparing our hearts to forgive is an important step that requires us to open the door of our hearts. Why? Because we were wounded in our hearts and therefore true forgiveness must occur from our hearts. If we attempt to forgive someone or ourselves from our head or our emotions, we fall short. Our heart is the place we were wounded, and from the heart is where we are to forgive. In order for us to forgive as Jesus commands, we must open the door. A closed heart keeps unforgiveness locked in, and forgiveness

locked out. Simply stated, forgiveness can only begin when our hearts are open and not closed.

Sometimes opening our heart requires us to overcome a hurdle. At times we believe the pain we have suffered at our offender’s hands renders us powerless to open the door. This is not true. We always have the ability to open the door of our heart anytime we choose. If our hearts are closed, we can choose to open them right now. And that would be a great thing to do, because Someone you love is standing at the door asking you to open up and forgive—His name is Jesus.

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Is the door of your heart open today, if not, when will you open it?

Extend Compassion

WHAT GOD SAYS

"Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" Matthew 18:33

Compassion moves us to forgive others just as God has forgiven us.

Ronny and Gale were not only business partners but close friends, whose families spent quality time together. Then the unexpected happened. An opportunity was presented to Gale that could rapidly advance his career. So, instead of telling his partner Ronny about it, he kept his plans to himself and developed an exit strategy at the expense of their current business.

I remember talking to Ronny during those days about Gale, because he knew something was going on, but he couldn't put his finger on it. He figured his buddy was going through a rough time and would eventually pull out of it.

A few months later the devastation hit. Without any warning or advanced notice, Gale abruptly quit to start a new competing business, and took several of Ronny's key employees with him. Ronny was hurt, angry and devastated. In fact, he had to work every weekend just to keep his fractured business afloat. His close friend had become his greatest enemy.

Once the dust settled a bit, I asked Ronny if he had forgiven Gale for

what he had done. That question set off an explosive volcano: "Forgive him, are you kidding me! You've got to be crazy, I'll never forgive him for what he did to me," he blurted out. I continued to allow him to vent for a while, then he slowly came to a place where God's Spirit could convict him. His heart softened, "You know I really feel sorry for him." Once he reached that place, his compassion flowed and he forgave his friend for everything he did. The second step to forgive is to extend compassion to the person who wounded you.

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

If you betrayed a close friend out of greed and made a terrible mistake, would you want the person you hurt to forgive you? Now place yourself in the position of a person who needs your compassion. Extend to them the compassion you hope someone else would extend to you.

Release the Prisoner

WHAT GOD SAYS

“Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.” Matthew 18:27

Whenver we fail to forgive someone for a trespass, mistake, or a wound, we form a Heart-Prison: An inner prison constructed with emotional, mental and spiritual walls to incarcerate the person who wounded us. Our Heart-Prisons are located deep within our inner life, hidden from all others and only accessible by us. Look again at the words of Jesus and you’ll notice the order of forgiveness is first to “release him” and then to “forgive him.” Separate the person from what they did to you. Release the person and then forgive the trespasses they did against you.

The number of cells in our Heart-Prisons can vary depending on how many people we have failed to forgive. Each unforgiven person occupies a cell. Some of us may only have empty cells, because they don’t have any unforgiven people. Others may have a prison filled to capacity with many occupied cells.

However, for the follower of Jesus Christ to have even one person incarcerated is one too many. The will of God is for us to have no inmates on our premises. If we have a Heart-Prison with one single person present,

then God delivers us to be tormented until we set them free.

Releasing the prisoners requires us to take a journey down into our Heart-Prison in order to free the people we have held in captivity. We reach into our pocket and pull out the only key that can open their cell door. Once we have placed the key in the lock and opened the door—we grant them a release and set them free. Finally, in our hearts we embrace them with the liberating words, “I release you from my Heart-Prison and you are no longer bound within my heart. I’m sorry for holding you here for so long.” Remember, the person isn’t equal to the harmful act that they committed—so release the person and tomorrow you can forgive them.

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Do you have anyone in your Heart-Prison you need to release today? You may have a close friend who betrayed you ten years ago still locked away. Remember everything good about them—and set them free.

Forgive Each Sin and Wound

WHAT GOD SAYS

"So My Heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." Matthew 18:35

One major mistake we make when it comes to forgiveness is taking the one-stop-shop approach. We innocently think if we just say "I forgive her" and mean it, then we truly have forgiven. But Jesus reveals another secret about forgiveness. In fact, our misunderstanding about this is why we find ourselves having to forgive the same person over and over again instead of just once.

Because each person who committed an injustice toward us caused a separate wound, then each of those individual wounds must be separately forgiven. Jesus instructs us to forgive the person's "trespasses" not just "trespass." Because each trespass caused a separate wound, we must forgive each trespass, one at a time.

Picture a person standing several feet away holding a bow and arrows. This person could be a father, a co-worker, a child, a church member, or even yourself. The arrows won't kill you, but they sure have the power to hurt you deeply. For whatever reason, that person reaches into the quiver and begins to shoot arrow after arrow into your heart. When they turn and walk away you are left with several wounds in your heart caused by each individual arrow.

For your heart to completely heal you can't just address one wound, you have to attend to each arrow, one at a time. That's why the Bible reveals that we must forgive our brother for his trespasses (plural) because each wound caused by an injustice must be forgiven in order for your heart to heal. At times, we can be the target of more than one archer and are hit by many arrows. To heal requires that we release each archer and then forgive them for each arrow that hit our hearts. Once we have attended to each wound, we have forgiven and our hearts will be free to heal.

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Think over your life. Who wounded you the most? Now, take out a separate piece of paper and list as many different wounds that you can remember.

To truly forgive to God's satisfaction, you must forgive each one.

Bless and Do Good

WHAT GOD SAYS

²⁷“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.” Luke 6:27-28

Paul was a vibrant young believer in his twenties who was pursuing Jesus with all of his heart. Though he had accepted Christ, he still had a lot of anger and bitterness pent up inside towards his father and mother. His father was an abusive man who was seldom present in the home. His mother was a self-serving and neglectful woman.

Over the years, we talked a lot about his parents, but more so about his father. In those early conversations, despite what I tried to interject, his heart was so walled off to his father (in his Heart-Prison) he couldn't receive a word I said. What made matters worse was that his father would continually make promises to him that he wouldn't keep. And his relationship with his mother remained strained and broken. So the wounding in his soul continued, and he made it extremely clear to me he wasn't happy about it!

Eventually Paul broke through and released each of them and then forgave his mother and his father for each and every wound. Nothing changed as far as his parent's behavior towards him was concerned. However, his behavior and attitude toward them changed dramatically.

At times when he spoke to me about his parents, his heart would fill with love and compassion to the point that tears would stream down his face. He became more helpful to his mother, and supported his dad even when his dad failed to support him. Paul stopped cursing his parents and started to bless them. Several years later, his prayers were answered. His parents came to faith in Jesus Christ. What a lesson for us all—blessing and praying for those who have wounded us is good medicine for all of our hearts. Why not try it!

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Who has wounded you and you have already forgiven? Why not take this final step and take a moment and pray a blessing over them.