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Failure To Forgive

Week 5 - Trouble In Paradise

Aloha everyone! This week's message, "Failure to Forgive," explores the consequences of not forgiving. We will draw inspiration from the story of Absalom in 2 Samuel 13, observing the destructive nature of holding onto grudges and harboring bitterness. We are encouraged to embrace the transformative power of forgiveness in our lives and to encounter God's grace and mercy as we delve into the profound impact of forgiveness on our journey of faith.

Harboring bitterness and resentment affects us in many ways. It takes a toll on our minds, bodies and relationships. Whether something was said or done to us, or an offense that we may have committed toward someone else, not releasing forgiveness has lasting effects that ripple beyond our lives.

Unforgiveness is a state of emotional and mental distress resulting from a delayed response in forgiving an offender. It may be characterized by indignation, bitterness and a demand for punishment, creating a domino effect that negatively impacts our emotions, thoughts, behaviors, body, spirit, and relationships. The inability to forgive oneself may result in guilt and self loathing. Unforgiveness is refusing to extend grace to others or oneself. It withholds freedom from the past preventing individuals to fully move into the future.

Effects of this can be illustrated by the "baby elephant syndrome." The story is told of a man that observed a fully grown elephant. The elephant's leg was tethered to a stake in the ground by a simple rope. The man asked the trainer, "How is it that the elephant, with its immense size and strength, know to stay in place and not roam free? Surely the stake in the ground is not strong enough to keep it there."

"Well," the trainer replied, "When they were young, they weren't strong enough to free themselves. Now, that they're fully grown, as soon as they feel a bit of resistance, they're conditioned to think they still can't free themselves."

Unforgiveness is a lot like that. It prevents us from moving forward in life due to certain conditioning and perceptions we may have.

The second book of Samuel introduces us to a character that held on to a grudge that ultimately led to his death. His name is Absalom, a son of King David.

“Now David’s son Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar. And Amnon, her half brother, fell desperately in love with her. Amnon became so obsessed with Tamar that he became ill. She was a virgin, and Amnon thought he could never have her. But Amnon had a very crafty friend—his cousin Jonadab. He was the son of David’s brother Shimea. One day Jonadab said to Amnon, “What’s the trouble? Why should the son of a king look so dejected morning after morning?” So Amnon told him, “I am in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister” (2 Samuel 13:1-4 NLT).

This story is a vivid example of “Trouble In Paradise.” David, as king, had many wives and produced many children. We see several violations of the Mosaic law told in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Issues as multiple marriages, incest and rape were clear abominations in the eyes of God.

Amnon, who was heir to the throne, was infatuated with his half-sister, Tamar. He assaulted her, raped, then discarded her. This angered Absalom. In his time of consoling her, Absalom encouraged Tamar to not worry. So, for two years, Absalom harbored bitterness in his heart, resented Amnon for the crime he committed against Tamar and plotted revenge.

1. When we fail to forgive, malice takes root in the heart.

Malice is defined as, “intending to do harm.” In this time, Absalom gathered a rebellion. Furthermore, he developed a hatred toward his father, King David, for not holding Amnon accountable and also devised a plan to overthrow the king and claim the throne for himself.

2. When we fail to forgive, blessings stop and bitterness spread.

One could certainly understand the severity of the trauma Tamar experienced. Also, one could also empathize with the anger Absalom harbored due to the crime committed. He was

angry at Amnon for his action and was also angry at David for his inaction and inability to respond justly, developing a hatred for his brother and distrust for his father. Both hatred and distrust becoming bitter seeds of malice, developing into chains binding his heart with the inability to release forgiveness and receive love. Furthermore, it affected the lives of other family members, soldiers and citizens of the kingdom.

3. When we fail to forgive, we live in darkness and cause others to do the same.

The good news is found in Jesus Christ. We don't have to live in darkness, blinded by anger, rage, guilt and self-loathing. To live in the light is to live in freedom.

“Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life” (John 8:12 NLT).

Here are 5 things to focus on as we are to forgive others.

1. We have the power to love - “Above all, maintain an intense love for each other, since love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8 HCSB).
2. Imitate God - “Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ” (Ephesians 5:1-2 NLT).
3. Give it to Jesus - “Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you” (1 Peter 5:7 NLT).
4. Healing in our praise - “Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed; save me, and I will be saved, for You are my praise” (Jeremiah 17:14 HCSB).
5. Truth and Transparency before God - “Nothing in all the world can be hidden from God. Everything is clear and lies open before him and to him we must explain the way we have lived” (Hebrews 4:13 ICB).

Discussion Questions

1. Discussing past hurts can be discomfoting. Do you have someone to help you process your thoughts? Are there others in whom you can find encouragement?
2. How would you define forgiveness? Is there a connection between loving others and forgiving others? How so?
3. Identify some things that you may be holding back from. Was there an experience in your past that might have been the root cause of it?
4. Guilt can be related to self hatred or self loathing. Have you experienced this kind of emotion? How is it related to forgiveness of oneself?
5. Which character of the story do you most empathize with? Least empathize with? How does the story affect you at all? What kind of emotions does this story cause you to feel?