

Week 3: Practicing Forgiveness Without Ignoring Wisdom or Boundaries

Speaker: Angela Etter

Forgiveness Is About the Condition of My Heart. (Colossians 3:13)

- Forgiveness releases the desire to punish, retaliate, or remain bitter.
- We can acknowledge genuine hurt without allowing bitterness to control us.
- Bring anger and hurt honestly to God rather than denying those emotions.
- Forgiveness begins by remembering how much God has forgiven us.
- Forgiveness can free our own heart, even when the other person never changes.
- Discuss: Is there a situation in my life where God may be asking me to forgive—but also asking me to use greater wisdom?

Forgiveness and Trust Are Not the Same Thing (Proverbs 22:3)

- Forgiveness can be given; trust must be built.
- Forgiveness does not require blindly trusting ongoing dishonest or destructive behavior.
- Trust develops through honesty, consistency, responsibility, and changed behavior.
- Repeated words without changed behavior should be evaluated carefully.
- Look at a person's patterns, not merely their promises.
- Reconciliation usually requires both people; forgiveness can begin with one.
- Forgiveness does not automatically restore a relationship to what it was before, or at all.
- Discuss: What do I need to release? Bitterness, resentment, anger, revenge, or the need to make someone pay?

Healthy Boundaries Can Be Biblical. (Proverbs 4:23)

- Boundaries define what behavior we accept and how we respond to inappropriate behavior.
- Jesus showed compassion without allowing others' demands to control His decisions.
- Boundaries may include limiting conversations, personal information, requiring accountability, or creating distance.
- We can pray for someone, want God's best for them, and forgive while maintaining necessary distance.
- Discuss: What wisdom do I need to practice? A boundary, accountability, patience, distance, a difficult conversation, or waiting for trust to be rebuilt?

Forgiveness Leaves Justice with God While Walking Forward Wisely. (Romans 12:19; James 1:5)

- Forgiveness requires surrendering our desire for personal revenge.
- We don't have to make someone “pay” emotionally before moving forward.
- Ask God whether a relationship should be restored, changed, or kept at a distance.
- When reconciliation isn't wise or possible, we can still refuse to live with hatred.
- Christ is our ultimate example. Having received extraordinary grace, we extend grace to others.
- Remember we might be the only example people see of Jesus.

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Things to Think About

- Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting. Remembering can help us make wiser choices.
- Forgiveness doesn't automatically equal trust. Trust can be rebuilt through consistently changed actions.
- Boundaries aren't automatically bitterness. Limits can exist without hatred or revenge.
- Reconciliation and forgiveness aren't identical. We can forgive even when someone won't repent or rebuild the relationship.
- Give God the bitterness while asking Him for wisdom. Release revenge while making careful relational decisions.

Discussion Questions

- How will consistently practicing forgiveness affect my family?
- Why can it be so hard to establish boundaries? Is it harder or easier to establish boundaries with family members? Why or why not?

NOTES: