

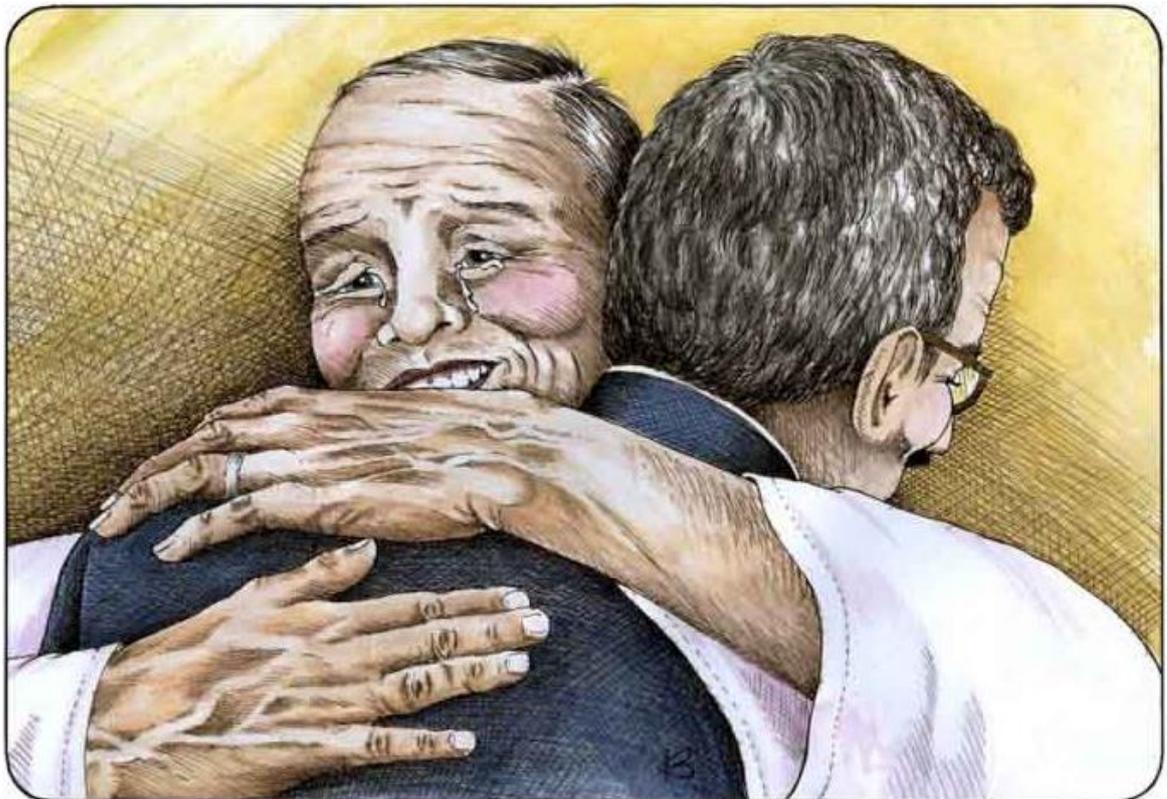
PROGRESSING TOGETHER



COURSE 111

FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

Group leader Version with Notes and Answer Key



Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Matthew 5:9

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COURSE 111 – Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Objectives of Course 111

1. *To understand the biblical concepts of sin, God’s grace and forgiveness and how these apply to human relationships.*
2. *To apply the biblical teaching on forgiveness to our relationships, knowing when and how a relationship can be restored.*
3. *To address the emotional hurt and pain caused by our own and others' sin and to trust that God is our healer.*
4. *To embrace our responsibility as Ambassadors of Christ entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation.*

Lessons

1	God’s wonderful forgiveness
2	Asking for and granting forgiveness
3	Dealing with our own hurts
4	Steps in the process of reconciliation
5	Living under grace with our brothers and sisters in Christ
6	Ambassadors of God and peacemakers

Introduction

In this course, we explore the vital topics of forgiveness and reconciliation. In Lesson 1, we begin by looking at the wonderful act of love that God demonstrated toward us by sending his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross and take the sin of the world on himself. As a result of this great sacrifice, the Father declares all who believe in Jesus to be forgiven and reconciled to God.

In Lessons 2 through 5, we examine how we as forgiven and reconciled believers should likewise forgive our brothers and sisters in Christ. How are we to do this? What steps should we take when a brother sins against us?

In Lesson 6, we consider what it means as reconciled believers to be ministers of reconciliation in this fallen world. How are we to forgive and reconcile with someone who doesn’t know Christ? What are some practical things we can do to be a peacemaker in our families and communities?

Throughout this course, we seek to find biblical and practical ways to **extend the forgiveness we have received from God to others** and to live as God’s ambassadors in a fallen world.

Note for the group leader:

This course is likely to bring to the surface some very sensitive issues. You will need to be ready to comfort and help the students when necessary. It is also recommended that you identify mature believers from within the Christian community who will be ready to counsel them.

Introductory Story

Note for the group leader:

For each Course in the Progressing Together Level 1 program, a story has been provided that illustrates the impact of the Biblical teaching on the life of the disciple. The stories are based on real-life testimonies. They can be used to encourage faith and raise interest in the importance of studying what God's Word has to say on the topic at hand. You can use them in your church fellowship to invite other participants to the Course, or as part of the introduction to the first lesson. Alternatively, you may read the story below to your students:

"My name is Youssef. I was born perfectly healthy, but when I was just six months old I had a fever. My mother took me to the doctor who gave me an injection. But it was the wrong injection and my leg was paralysed as a result. I still suffer from that today.

I grew up always asking, "Why me? Why did this happen?" Things could have been different. My mother could have taken me to another doctor. Why did I have to suffer for the rest of my life because of someone else's mistake? Why did God let it happen? Within me I felt a tremendous anger against that doctor and wished I could take revenge.

I did not have a normal childhood. I couldn't run and play like the other children. Everyone felt sorry for me and it destroyed my self-confidence. Of course, they were motivated by love and kindness but, because of the pain I suffered, I did not realise that.

I grew up, but it was as if I built walls around me. I became a prisoner within them. My hands gripped tightly on to what had happened. I could not forgive God or the doctor. I came to know God personally and my relationship with him gave me much joy, but there was still something missing within me. I remained trapped in the walls I had built.

Then came a day I will never forget. It is more than 20 years ago now. I went to a lecture on inner healing. On that day God dealt with my inner pain, with my inability to forgive, with my lack of self-confidence and my feelings of inferiority. He dealt with my anger towards Him and all my mixed-up emotions.

My eyes were opened to see that God had always been with me, even though I had not seen Him or known Him. He had been there with me. He had grieved with me when I was given the wrong injection.

God has given man free will. Sometimes we use it to hurt others and cause them harm, whether intentionally or not. The doctor did that when he made a mistake and caused my leg to be paralysed. It was not God who did that. He was with me, upholding me.

I saw the father heart of God and his love for me. In that moment, I decided to open my hands. I let go all the anger I had felt towards God and the doctor. God was not to blame and the doctor made a terrible mistake. God took away the bitterness in my heart and I stepped outside the prison I had made for myself.

This is what it means to forgive: to let go, to give up the bitterness, to be healed and to go free. When I returned home that day I felt as if I was walking on air. I was so happy. My leg was not healed. Physically, nothing had changed. But within myself I was joyful.

I will never forget the time when, many years later, I saw that doctor's son. I went and hugged him. He knew nothing about what had happened to me and how it had happened, but within me I felt a great peace.



Lesson 1: God's wonderful forgiveness

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To gain a biblical understanding of key terms: judgment, sin, faith, reconciliation, justification, righteousness, grace, confession and forgiveness.
2. To grow in understanding the hopelessness of our own sin before God, our need for a sacrifice and the price He paid for our forgiveness and redemption.
3. To recognize our need for repentance and confession of sin in order to reconcile with God and restore communion with Him.



Let us review some key passages you may have already studied in the Progressing Together Level One program. If these passages are new to you, you may require extra time to prepare this lesson by reading carefully the texts referred to before answering the questions in each section.



Read Genesis 3.



When God created Adam and Eve, he made them without sin. They were innocent and pure. He placed them in a garden paradise where they enjoyed fellowship with God and the freedom to take care of the world around them as they chose. They chose to disobey the one restriction God placed on their freedom. Reflect on what happened to Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God in the garden and be prepared to discuss this in your group.



How did their relationship with God change?

They lost their close fellowship with God.



How did their relationship with each other change?

They were no longer in harmony. Adam blamed Eve for their sin.



How did God punish them?

God drove them out of the Garden of Eden. Eve would suffer pain in childbirth and Adam would dominate her in their relationship. Adam would have to work hard to cultivate the ground. Finally, they would both die physically.



How did he show them loving mercy and grace?

He did not kill them instantly, but provided an animal sacrifice to cover the shame of their sin and clothe them. He gave them children.



Read Romans 5.

②

In Romans 5, the Apostle Paul explains how Adam’s sin affected all mankind, and how Jesus-Christ’s work rescued mankind from Adam’s curse and reconciled many to God. Paul introduces some key theological concepts in this chapter.



As you read the chapter, write down in the blank next to the word each verse where you find the key word:

1. **Justification:** Verses 9, 16 and 18
Or justified: Verse 1
2. **Faith:** Verses 1 and 2
3. **Grace:** Verses 2, 15 (twice), 17, 20 and 21
4. **Righteousness:** Verses 17, 18 and 21
Or righteous: Verses 7 and 19
5. **Sin:** Verses 12(twice), 13(twice), 16, 20 and 21
Or transgression: Verse 14
Or trespass: Verses 15(twice), 16 (twice), 17, 18 and 20
6. **Judgement:** Verse 16
Or wrath: Verse 9
Or condemnation): Verses 16 and 18
7. **Reconciliation:** Verse 11
Or reconciled: Verses 10 (twice)

Note for the group leader:

Different translations may use different related words.



Now use your list to write the correct word in the blank next to the correct definition. The first one is done for you:

Sin _____: A transgression of God’s law resulting in spiritual death and separation from God.

Judgment _____: God’s just and lawful verdict that men as sinners are guilty and must face the due penalty for their sins.

Justification _____: The act of God, the just Judge, who acquits the guilty sinner of all charges and declares him innocent, because Christ has paid the full penalty for his sins on the cross.

Faith _____: The definitive decision to trust in Christ and his death and resurrection on our behalf.

Grace _____: The unmerited love and favor of God given to those who deserve judgment.

Reconciliation _____: The restoration of the broken relationship between God and man through the sacrificial death of Jesus. A change from enmity and estrangement from God to one of harmony and fellowship with God.

Righteousness _____: Having a right standing before the Holy God and being fully acceptable to Him.



Romans chapter 5 begins by declaring that God justifies us sinful people when we believe in Him. This enables our Righteous God to forgive us the penalty of our sin and set us free. God's forgiveness toward us was not cheap!



Read again Romans 5:6-8. What did it cost God to forgive man's sin?

Christ, God's Son, died in our place.



Why did He pay that price?

Because He loved us.



What does this teach us about God's attitude toward us?

We see the depth of God's love and grace.



Read again Romans 5:9-11. What is our new relationship to God?

We are reconciled to Him through Christ's death. We will also be fully and finally saved by Christ, who is alive for evermore. We rejoice (verse 11).

Note for the group leader:

The result will be our enjoying peace with God as Paul says in verse 1.



Read again Romans 5:12-19. Explain in the boxes below:

- How Adam's sin affected humanity
- How Jesus's righteous life, death and resurrection undid those effects to restore us to God. (The first two are done for you).

Effects of Adam's sin	Effects of Christ's restoration
Death came to all people through one man's (Adam's) sin. (Verses 12,15)	God's gift overflowed to bring grace to many through one man (Christ). (Verse 15)
One sin led to judgment and condemnation. (Verse 16)	<i>The free gift brought justification despite many previous trespasses. (Verse 16)</i>
<i>Death reigned (through one man's trespass). (Verse 17)</i>	Those who receive God's gift of righteousness will reign in life. (Verse 17)
One man's sin led to condemnation for all. (Verse 18)	<i>One act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. (Verse 18)</i>
<i>One man's disobedience made many sinners. (Verse 19)</i>	By one man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Verse 19)

Note for the group leader:

Adam's disobedience brought sin, judgment, death and condemnation to all; while Christ's obedience in redemption graciously justified and restored many to righteousness and life. Paul repeats these themes in parallel (compare verse 16 and verse 18), with v17 being a central theme of the passage.



Read again Romans 5:20-21. Reflect on how God's grace through Christ surpasses the sins of all mankind. Write down your thoughts and be prepared to share them with the group.
God's grace is far more than enough to atone for man's sin, however evil man becomes. God offers us the opportunity to receive perfect righteousness through Christ. This should make us deeply thankful.



Read 1 John 1:5-2:2.



In 1 John 1:5 – 2:2, the Apostle John teaches about repentance and confession of sins.



The goal as a believer is to not sin (1 John 2:1). If we do sin, what do these verses tell us to do?

We must confess our sins (v.9). We must not pretend that we have not sinned.



What does God promise to do if we confess our sins?

He will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. This is possible through the blood of Christ. He has died for us, to atone for our sins. And now, alive at the right hand of the Father, he speaks to the Father in our defense.



Find the key words in the above Bible passage that are defined below, and write them before the corresponding definition.

To confess is to express that one recognizes the fault or sin one has committed and that one deserves to be punished for it

To forgive is to release someone from the requirement to repay a debt owed or from the punishment his/her offense deserves.



We confess our sins first and foremost to God but should we also confess our sins to other people? Most often, when we have sinned against another person, it will be right and necessary to confess our sin to that person and to ask their forgiveness. We will discuss this in the following lessons.

Other times, it can also be helpful to confess our sins to God in the presence of an older and wiser Christian believer. That person will be able to pray with us, to assure us of God's forgiveness and to advise us on what we should do next. There may be something we should do in order to put things right. Or we may need to leave it with God, accept His forgiveness and move on.

James 5:16 tells us: 'Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.'



Optional activity

1. Watch this [skit about the need to confess our sins](#). Then, discuss as a group why we are often slow to confessing our sins. Then, spend some time confessing your sins to God and ask him to set you truly free.

Short dialog between a sinner and Jesus about the confession of sins – 3 minutes

2. Read Psalm 32 or watch the [videoed version of Psalm 32](#) as a group and reflect on the importance of confession and the wonderful blessing of forgiveness.

Video – 2 minutes

3. Sing one of the following songs thanking God for his wonderful forgiveness. You can also choose your own song.

– [Psalm 32](#)

Modern song by Sons of Korah using the words of Psalm 32 – 3 minutes

– [I am forgiven](#)

Modern quiet song by Hillsong – 5 minutes

– [Clean](#)

Modern quiet song by Natalie Grant – 5 minutes

– [Amazing grace](#)

Traditional hymn – 5 minutes

– [Before the throne of God above](#)

Traditional hymn by Selah – 3 minutes



Applications

1. Spend a few moments in prayer giving thanks as a group for the things you have learned today. The following can get you started.

“We thank you, Lord, that...

- we have peace with you through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)
- if we confess our sins we know that you will forgive them and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)
- your unfailing love surrounds us. (Psalm 32:10)”

2. In the coming days, keep expressing your gratitude to God daily for his wonderful forgiveness in Christ.

Note for the group leader:

Tell the students that there will be a review activity at the end of this Course. They will be asked to compose a song summarizing what they have learned and illustrating how this has impacted their lives. Ask them to start thinking about this.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson 2: Asking for and granting forgiveness

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To embrace God's desire that we become like Him and forgive as He does.
2. To know our responsibility to seek the forgiveness of others.
3. To identify both those from whom we need to ask forgiveness and those we need to forgive.



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER.



Read Ephesians 4:32 – 5:2.



Fill in the blanks.

“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”



Grace and forgiveness are part of God's character and we are called to be like him – to imitate him. One of the ways we are to imitate his character is by forgiving others. We are told in these verses to “forgive one another as God in Christ forgave you.” A person who humbly recognizes how much he has been forgiven is a person who is able to forgive others.

Such a person will also be quick to seek the forgiveness of others when he realises that he has offended them.

When we recite the prayer that Jesus taught us (“the Lord's prayer” in Matthew 6:9-15), we state: “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Jesus expects us to forgive in this world of resentment and revenge. If we do not forgive, we are implying that others are not worthy of God's forgiveness and we are not imitating God's character.

Forgiveness can be difficult but it breaks the cycle of wrong and seeking revenge. By laying aside his bitterness, he who forgives finds healing. There is also the possibility that the offender will be transformed.

② ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS



Read Matthew 5:21-26.



Here we see a believer worshipping God. Suddenly, he realises that he has caused offence to his brother. The need for forgiveness and reconciliation becomes clear to him.



If you are the one offering your gift at the altar, are you or is your brother guilty of wrongdoing?

You (the person about to offer the gift) are guilty.



Are you or is your brother the one who is offended?

Your brother (the other person) is offended because of you.



Are you or is your brother responsible to initiate action?

You (the one about to offer the gift) are responsible to take the initiative.



What action does forgiveness require?

You must leave your gift and go and be reconciled to your brother.

Note for the group leader:

When we know that our brother or sister is struggling with hatred and bitterness toward ourselves, we need to take action to help him/her to overcome anger, to forgive us if necessary (or understand what really happened), and to reconcile (restore our relationship) as soon as possible.



Is there anyone you know who may harbor anger towards you?

③ JESUS GIVES US A MODEL FOR PRAYER



Read Matthew 6:9-15.



What condition must we meet to receive God's forgiveness?

We must forgive others.



What do we risk if we refuse to forgive?

Our heavenly father will not forgive us our sins.

Note for the group leader:

This does not necessarily mean you will lose your salvation; but your fellowship and access to God in prayer will be hindered or blocked as a result of your unwillingness to forgive.



Does this verse give any exceptions to forgiving others?

No!



When is it the hardest for you to forgive someone else?

Group discussion

Note for the group leader:

Encourage the group to share openly. If needed, answer the question yourself to get the discussion started. You could also read Luke 23:33-34 where Jesus said "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus was able to forgive the very ones who sent Him to His death. This question is designed to get the students thinking about the obstacles (feelings and emotions) that will hinder them when they need to forgive someone (Lesson Objective 3). If you share Luke 23 you can also tie this to forgiving as God forgave us (Lesson Objective 1).



When we realize we have a broken relationship with a brother or sister due to an offense, whether we are the one offended, or the one responsible for causing the offense, we are responsible to initiate forgiveness unless the other has reached out to us.



THE STORY OF TWO SERVANTS



Read Matthew 18:21-35.

A. Read again verses 21-22.



Forgiveness is hard especially if the sin is repeated over and over.



Why do you think Peter asks this question?

Peter thought there must be some limit to the number of times you had to forgive.



What does Jesus say in response?

Jesus' reply – seventy times seven – means that there is no limit.



What point is Jesus stressing?

That there should be no end to our willingness to forgive.

B. Read again verses 23-35.



In this parable, who does the king represent?

God



In what ways do we have a debt like the first servant?

Our sins – all the times we have broken God's laws – have built up a huge debt in God's sight.



Who does the second servant represent?

Someone who has offended us.



How does his debt compare with the debt of the first servant?

It is very small in comparison.



Why was the master so angry with the first servant?

Because he had not followed the master's wonderful example of generosity and forgiveness.

Note for the group leader:

Refer back to Ephesians 4:32. We should forgive others as we have been forgiven. We forgive because we realize how much we have been forgiven.



Optional activities

1. As a group, play the parable of the unforgiving servant as it is written in Matthew 18. Represent the servant's debt by a huge bag and his companion's debt by a tiny bag. Then, play the parable again putting a sign on the first servant's bag saying 'my debt of sin'. Then, spend some time in praise, thanking God for cancelling your debt and giving you eternal life.

2. Watch a video of the song '[Forgiveness](#)'. As you listen, ask God to speak to your heart and to show you whom you need to forgive.

Beautiful modern song by Matthew West - 4 minutes

3. Watch the following [video about forgiveness](#) (2 mins). Then, bring your own hurts to God in prayer and ask him to help you forgive those who sinned against you. After some time, pray the Lord's prayer together.

Short but powerful video on the theme of forgiveness - 2 minutes

Note for the group leader:

Be prepared to console and pray for those with new or recurring hurts or scars that surface during this time. Encourage them to forgive and to pray for their inner healing.



Applications

1. Pray and ask God to show you whether there are people whom you have offended and whom you may need to ask to forgive you.

Make a note of their names below:

-
-
-
-

Ask God to forgive you for sinning against them and to help you ask them for forgiveness.

Now, pray and ask God to show you whether there are people who have hurt you and whom you may need to forgive.

Make a note of their names below:

-
-
-
-

How does their sin compare with the sins God has forgiven you by giving his one and only Son, Jesus? Ask God to help you forgive them as he has forgiven you in Christ.

2. In the coming days, meditate on the forgiveness you have received from God, the price He paid for it and the eternal blessing you receive from it. Thank Him and keep asking Him to help you forgive with all your heart those who sin against you.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson ③: Dealing with our own hurts

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. *To acknowledge and abandon all anger and bitterness towards people who have sinned against us in the past.*
2. *To let God to transform our hearts and change the way we treat those who have hurt us.*
3. *To bring our hurts to God and experience God's healing.*



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



In Lesson 2, we learned that when we realize how much God has forgiven us, we can and must forgive others for the hurts that they have caused us. This is made possible by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

In this lesson, we are going to examine our hearts. Are there hurts or anger toward others who have offended us that might hinder us from forgiving them? We want to open our hearts and allow God to heal these hurts and replace our anger with His love. Then, with our hearts transformed, we will begin to extend grace and forgiveness, following Jesus' great example, to those who have hurt us.



① LOVE OVERCOMES ANGER



Read Luke 15:11-32 - The Parable of the Prodigal Son



This parable is really about a forgiving father and 2 lost sons. Not only was the prodigal son lost to his father in the far country, but the older son, who stayed behind on the farm with the father, was just as lost to his father even though he was with his father every day.

A. The younger son – Read verses 11-24 again.



The younger son greatly offended his father, betrayed his family, and broke trust with the whole community when he demanded his share of the inheritance and left for a distant land.



How would he have expected to be received by his father and the community upon his humble return?

He should have been met with rebuke and disdain by the father and the community.



How instead did the father receive him (verses 20-24)?

The father responded with compassion, forgiving and accepting the wayward son.



What steps did the father take to show his love and acceptance of the younger son?

Embraced and kissed him, put a robe on him, put a ring on him, put shoes on him, threw a feast for him.



Do you know any earthly father who would respond in this way?

The answer is most probably no. The father demonstrated an extraordinary kind of love that is not seen in most fathers in the world today.



Why do you suppose the father acted in this way?

The father showed steadfast compassionate love for his son. He looked beyond the son's offensive behaviour, seeking to restore him and win back his heart.

The father shows us a clear picture of the compassion that God has for us. God did not let our sin keep Him from loving us and going to the cross to forgive our sins.

Note for the group leader:

You can refer to Romans 5:8 and Psalm 103:8-14 to show God's compassion towards sinners.

B. The older son - Read verses 25-32 again.



The older son also offended his father and disgraced the family in front of the community by refusing to come into the party.

Re-read verses 25-28.



When the older son learned the reason for the celebration what was his response?

He was angry and refused to enter the party.



Has the older brother been able to forgive his younger brother?

Obviously not. He was holding on to the anger he felt toward the situation with the younger brother. Anger and bitterness were entrenched in his heart.



How do you think the older son's refusal to come into the party was received by the other guests and his father?

It would have been very embarrassing to the father in front of the other guests.



We would expect the father to become angry at this and rebuke his older son. What did the father do instead?

He left his guests and the party and went out to the older son to entreat him to come into the party.

Re-read verses 29-32.



How did the older son respond to his father's loving entreaty?

He rejected his father's entreaty as well as his younger brother. He lists off a number of self-righteous grievances and even calls into question his father's character.

Note for the group leader:

At this point, we would certainly expect the father to rebuke his older son and cast him out of the house. Not only has he embarrassed him in front of his guests, but now has talked back to him calling into question the father's character.



What was the response of the father towards his older son's angry refusal?

He still dealt with him in loving grace and desired him to come to the party.

Note for the group leader:

You could relate this story to their experience and ask an application question, saying something like this:

The older son's angry reaction to the acceptance of the prodigal son by the forgiving father is illustrative of how many of us react when we are wronged. We hold on to our anger and let it turn to bitterness; this eventually hardens our hearts and ruins other relationships in our lives. Have you harbored anger or hardened your heart toward anyone?

The father's extension of grace and forgiveness to both the older son and the prodigal son illustrates how we should extend grace and forgiveness to those in our life who have sinned against us. This breaks the chains of anger that can control our heart. It brings us great joy and allows us to rejoice and celebrate when forgiveness is accepted and the relationship is restored.

C. Releasing anger and bitterness



In what ways are you like the younger son?

We have all sinned and fallen short of God's standards in many ways.



In what ways are you like the older son?

It is easy for us to think that we are better than other people because we have not committed too many gross or obvious sins. We can become proud and hard-hearted and withhold forgiveness from those who have hurt us.



Is there a situation in your life, like the older son's, where you are withholding forgiveness from someone?

(The answers will vary according to the personal experiences of the participants.)



In what ways do you need to experience the Father's forgiveness?

We need to realize that Christ died for us and has taken all our sins on himself. This is the only true source of peace.



In what ways do you need to extend forgiveness to others as the Father did?

Personal response. Now that we have been forgiven, we must also extend that forgiveness to others.

Note for the group leader:

You can refer back to the parable of the two debtors in Matthew 18:21-35 which we studied in lesson 2.

② OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD



Read Romans 12:1-2 and 14-21 - Commands for Transformed Believers



In Romans 12, Paul appeals to believers, who have experienced God’s great mercies, to not be conformed to the world, but rather to be transformed. Paul then gives a series of commands regarding this transformation and calls us to be gracious and forgive others who have wronged us.



In verse 1, what do you think is meant by the “mercies of God”?

God’s great love and compassion toward us that caused Him to forgive and save us.



In verse 2, Paul tells us “not to be conformed to the ways of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind”. How do you allow God to renew your mind?

We must first have the desire to have our mind renewed (present our body as a living sacrifice). Second, God, through the power of His Holy Spirit living in our hearts, changes/renews our mind through consistent practice of the spiritual disciplines of studying and meditating on God’s Word, prayer, fasting, and worship, along with the mutual encouragement of joining with others in a local church.

Note for the group leader:

These first 2 verses set the stage for the following activity on extending grace toward those who have hurt us. We must first remember how much we have been forgiven and how gracious God has been toward us.



Re-read verses 14-21. Make a list of the commands given in this passage. Then consider how you can put these verses into practice.

Note for the group leader:

The goal of this chart is to help the students move from hurt and anger to forgiveness and grace.

Commands	How can I put this into practice?
Bless those who persecute you	
Rejoice with those who rejoice	
Mourn with those who mourn	
Live in harmony with one another	
Do not be proud	
Do not repay evil for evil	
Do what is right in the eyes of everyone	
Live at peace with everyone	
Do not take revenge	
‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him...’	
Overcome evil with good	

③ LETTING GOD BIND UP YOUR WOUNDS.



Read Psalm 147:3 and Psalm 34:18 - God's healing promises.



God not only forgives our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness, but he also cares about the feelings in our hearts. His promises are true.



Fill in the blanks.

Psalm 147:3 "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds ."

Psalm 34:18 "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit ."



Optional activities

1. Watch one of the following videos:

– [Broken](#)

Wordless animated video showing how we need a new heart to be able to forgive others. – 3 minutes

– [I forgive you](#)

Poem expressing the difficulty and joy of forgiving – 3 minutes

Then, spend some time in prayer asking God to heal your heart and help you to forgive those who hurt you.

2. As you listen to any of the following songs (or one of your own choice on the theme of God healing the broken-hearted), pray for God to bring you comfort and healing:

– [Be Still My Soul](#)

Traditional song sung by Kari Jobe - 5 minutes

– [Healer](#)

Song by Hillsong - 5 minutes

– [Praise Him in the Storm](#)

Song by Natalie Grant - 5 minutes

– [God of All my Days](#)

Song by Casting Crowns - 5 minutes

– [I Am not Alone](#)

Song by Kari Jobe - 6 minutes

3. Pray and ask God to help you deal with your emotional pain. Then, on a sheet of paper, draw symbols representing the hurts that you have endured because others sinned against you. Confess your negatives reactions (anger, bitterness or desire for revenge) and ask God to forgive you. After that, present your hurt to God in prayer (you can hold out your drawing to present each hurt to Him if this helps) and ask Him to heal you. Thank Him for His sure promises that He is near to you in your pain and that He is healing your broken heart. Now, write across your drawing: 'God binds up my wounds'. Put your drawing in a place where you will see it often and continue to hold onto God's promises as He keeps on healing your broken heart. The healing process may take some time.

Note for the group leader:

Only do this activity if it is applicable in your group and if you are prepared to console those with new or recurring hurts or scars that surface during this time. Encourage them to forgive and to pray for their inner healing. Some participants may need more help. Be prepared to put them in touch with a mature believer who can counsel them.



Applications

1. Review the list of names that you wrote down in the Application section of Lesson 2. Now, look at the list of actions based on Romans 12 that we looked at in this lesson. Pray and ask God to show you one or two actions based on Romans 12 that you should put into practice in your relationship with these people. During this week, put into practice what God has shown you.
2. Meditate on the two verses from the Psalms that we studied in this lesson. Thank God for his presence, comfort and care for the broken-hearted. Pray and ask Him to heal any hurts you are experiencing. Share with each other verses that have ministered to you in times when you are hurting.
3. In the coming days, continue to ask God to help you forgive and to heal you.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also share a testimony of how God enabled you to extend grace and forgiveness.



Lesson 4: Steps in the Process of Reconciliation

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To understand when we need to forgive someone from the heart and move on.
2. To understand when we need to confront someone in order to be reconciled.
3. To understand the process of church discipline.
4. To recognize when the restoration of a relationship is not recommended.



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



As we have seen in the first three lessons, forgiving others can be very hard. It requires releasing the offender from any debt or penalty he/she owes you, while you accept to live with the loss. It involves laying aside our rights and feelings and embracing a Christ-like attitude. When we forgive others who have wronged us, it shows we understand the love, grace, and mercy that God demonstrated toward us when He forgave us.

In Lesson 2, we learned that forgiving others begins first in our hearts. However, we must sometimes in love take additional steps to correct the offender and restore him/her to obedience to God and Church fellowship.

In this lesson, we want to consider a variety of situations that call for forgiveness and how we are instructed to forgive in each one. Likewise, we want to learn how and when reconciliation can take place. To do so, we will examine three key passages: Mark 11:25, Luke 17:1-4 and Matthew 18:15-20.



FORGIVING IN THE HEART



Read Mark 11:25. – Compare Matthew 6:14-15



Jesus' message is clear. He commands us to forgive those who offend us. Until we do, our relationship to God in prayer will be hindered.



In Mark 11:25, if you are the one standing praying, are you or is the other person accused of wrongdoing?

It is the other person who has sinned against you.



Are you or is the other person the one who is offended?

You are because you have need to forgive the other person.



Are you or is the other person responsible to initiate action?

You are while you are praying.



What action does forgiveness require?

You must simply forgive in your heart while continuing to pray.



Is there ever a situation where a believer is not obliged to forgive?

No. However, a believer may need great wisdom in how to relate in the future to someone who has caused them serious hurt.

Note for the group leader:

Modern scholars do not regard verse 26: 'But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins' as part of Mark's original text because it is not found in the most ancient manuscripts. It may have been added later by a scribe who was copying Mark's gospel and was reminded of Jesus' teaching in Matthieu. 6:15.



CORRECTING AND RESTORING A BROTHER OR SISTER



Now, let us look at another situation requiring forgiveness. Notice that, in this context, the person involved is "a little one," a younger brother or sister in the faith.



Read Luke 17:1-4.



If you are the one Jesus is talking to, are you or is your brother the one accused of wrongdoing?

The brother



Are you or is your brother the one who is offended?

You are.



Are you or is your brother responsible to initiate action?

You are, initially, to rebuke him.



What action does forgiveness require? (v 3)

You should correct him and then, if he repents, forgive him.



What should you do when someone sins against you multiple times? (v. 4)

If he repents for each sin, you should forgive him every time.

Note for the group leader:

We must not hold back our forgiveness on the eighth time! In reality, quite rarely will someone repeat an offense so many times in a single day. Religious Jews limited forgiveness to three instances, considering that beyond this a person's repentance was not sincere. Jesus goes beyond this number, but is not establishing a new limit; rather he is encouraging a spirit of grace and generosity.

 **Read again Mark 11:25 and Luke 17:3. - Compare Jesus' teaching.**

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” Mark 11:25

“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.” Luke 17:3

 The first step is to ‘forgive in your heart’ (Mark). What additional step does Jesus ask the believer to take in Luke?

To rebuke the brother or sister who has offended him.

 Why do you think Jesus commands us to do this?

So that the other person can realise the wrong they have done, repent and the relationship can be restored.

 If the brother or sister does not repent, the offended believer must still forgive in their heart. However, at this point the relationship cannot be fully restored. Some further steps are necessary.

③ THE PROCESS OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

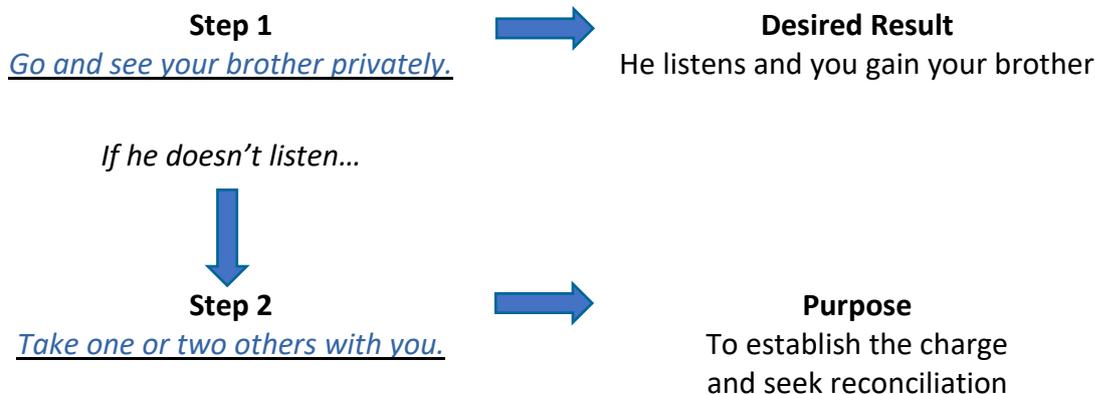
 **Read Matthew 18:15-20.**

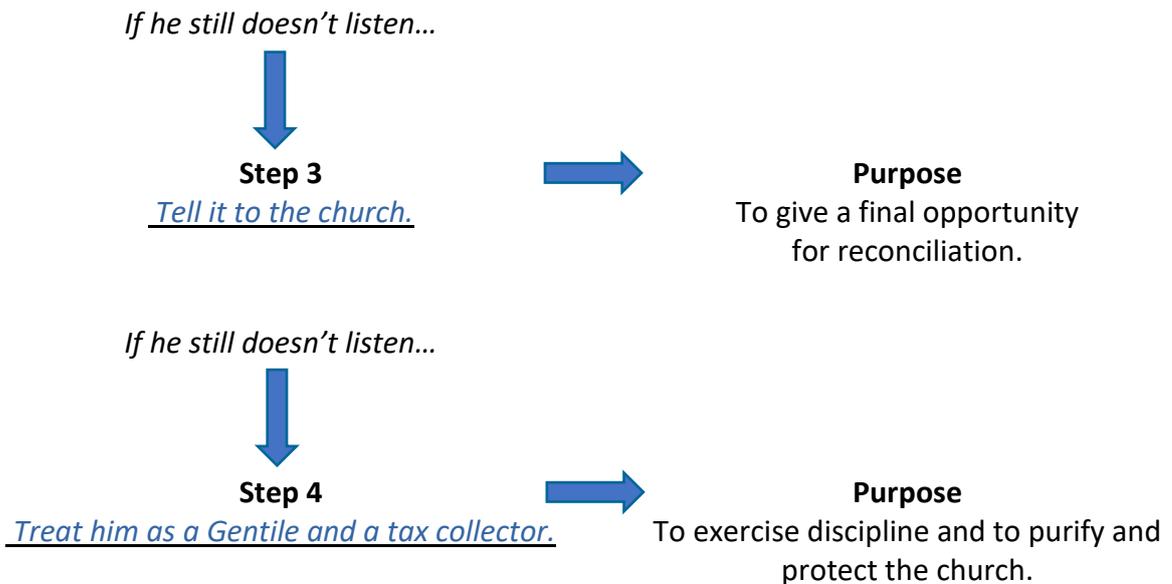
 Here Jesus develops further the teaching given in Luke 17:3. The goal in speaking to your brother or sister is still the same, but what happens if they are unwilling to recognise their sin and the offence they have caused?

 What is the goal in seeking out your wayward brother?

To win your brother over.

 What steps should you take to seek forgiveness and reconciliation? Fill in the blanks.





Note for the group leader:

Depending on time available and students' level, you could develop these steps together. Note the preceding verses (18:1-14) – the 'little ones' and the 'lost sheep'. The goal is always to find your brother and restore the relationship. Also, as in 2 Thessalonians 3:15, the steps of forgiveness are not meant as an attack on an enemy but rather as a warning out of concern for a brother.



What did Jesus mean when he said "let him be to you as a gentile and a tax collector"?

Withhold from him the privileges belonging to believers in Christ.

Note for the group leader:

Both gentiles and tax collectors were seen as outcasts by the Jews. A gentile was anyone who was not born as a Jew and who normally held to pagan beliefs. They were excluded from the worship, rites, and privileges of Israel and were generally looked down upon. A tax collector was even more despised than a gentile. A tax collector was a Jew who had sold out to the Romans and was considered a traitor. In Mark 2:16, the Pharisees speak of "sinners and tax collectors" as a group of despised people that were not to be associated with. The idea behind treating an unrepentant sinner as a gentile and a tax collector was to exclude that sinner from the community of faith. This should include such things as...

- Removing from any teaching or service responsibility.*
- Removing from participation in the Lord's supper.*
- Not allowing to participate in Church decisions.*
- In cases of danger, removing from church meetings and regular contact with church members.*

All the while, the offending brother should be encouraged to repent from the sins that are causing this exclusion. If the brother repents, the measures above should be removed and fellowship should be restored. In Matthew 8 and Luke 19, we see examples of a gentile and a tax collector who believed in Jesus and were accepted by him.

Read again verses 17-20.



What comfort and confidence are given to the believer who seeks to restore his wayward brother by following these steps?

When a believer has faithfully gone through this process with the church, God will confirm the decision they have come to. (We don't know if the other person repented or not.)

Note for the group leader:

In a wider sense, these verses also apply to any decision agreed in prayer among believers.

④ PRACTICAL SITUATIONS – WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

After comparing the situations where forgiveness is required above, answer the following questions by ticking all the boxes that apply.



When do you suppose it is sufficient to forgive in one's heart without addressing the situation with the offending brother or sister?

When the offense is minor.

Note for the group leader:

Especially when someone is already struggling with other priority sins it may be overwhelming to bring up extra challenges.

When the offense is not a harmful habit or not likely to be often repeated.

When only we ourselves are affected.

When we fear the offender will reject us for rebuking him/her.

Note for the group leader:

This is not a valid reason, so long as we believe the correction is necessary. But, at the same time, we must emphasize to the offender that we love them and want to improve and develop our relationship with them. We must also be ready to listen to how the other person sees the situation. We may have misunderstood.

When it is dangerous to meet with the offender.

Note for the group leader:

Such a situation should always be discussed with a church leader or trusted brother or sister. It would not be advisable to put yourself in danger. It may also be that other action needs to be taken.



When is it important to confront the offender and insist on repentance before dropping or forgetting the matter? (Remember also Matthew 18:15-20.)

When the offense is very serious or harmful.

Note for the group leader:

Some offences, for example the abuse of children, or other serious criminal activity, must be reported immediately to both church and secular authorities, where they can

be trusted. In addition, if the crime is not properly rebuked, others in the faith who are aware of the problem may be confused or even fall into the sin themselves. It may also cause nonbelievers to be offended and turn away.

- When others around us are also affected by the offense.

Note for the group leader:

As a general rule, sins that are committed publicly should be dealt with publicly and those privately in private.

- When the sin is keeping the offender from progressing in his/her walk with God.

- When the offender needs to be humiliated for his/her offense

Note for the group leader:

We should never want to see another person humiliated. We must leave punishment with God.

- When we are having difficulty forgiving the person in our heart.

Note for the group leader:

Your inability to forgive the person is not by itself a sufficient reason to confront the offender and require repentance. However, it could be a reason to talk with the offender and have an honest conversation about the offending behavior. This could:

- 1) clarify the situation.*
- 2) enable the offender to repent or explain.*
- 3) help you to be able to forgive.*

You could also seek out a church leader or trusted brother or sister in Christ to help you work through your struggle and determine which steps to take next to get your relationship right with the person who has offended you.

- When the offender needs to be excluded or exposed to protect others from danger.

Note for the group leader:

Note again that some offences, for example the abuse of children, or other serious criminal activity, must be reported immediately to both church and secular authorities, where they can be trusted.

In both Luke 17 and Matt 18, Jesus is addressing his disciples regarding his "little ones" who are weak and could easily stumble. (See also Galatians 6:1.) This does not mean we should not forgive and restore more mature believers also, but it highlights our responsibility to redress and care for those who are young and weak in the faith (and need our special attention).



Optional activity

Divide into two groups.

The first group prepares and play a skit showing how we usually react when someone who has offended us. Then, they will play the same scenario, showing how we should handle the situation according to what they learned in this lesson.

The second group prepares a skit showing how we usually react when we have offended someone else. Then, they play the same scenario, showing how we should handle the situation according to what they learned in this lesson.

 **Applications**

1. Take your two lists from the Application Sections of Lessons 2 and 3. The first list has the names of those you have offended and from whom you may still need to ask forgiveness. The second list has the names of those who have offended you. You may have forgiven them or perhaps you still need to forgive them or to speak to them directly so that you can be reconciled.

Now, pray and ask God to show you what course of action needs to be taken:

- Ask for forgiveness?
- Forgive in the heart?
- Or confront in order to be reconciled?

The people I have offended	Ask for forgiveness

The people who have offended me	Forgive in my heart	Rebuke/correct in order to be reconciled

Pray for the Lord to give you wisdom and courage as you seek as you seek forgiveness and reconciliation appropriately with each one.

2. In the coming days, keep praying for each of these people and ask God to prepare you for the next steps towards reconciliation.

 **Sharing**

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson **5**: Living under Grace with Our Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Name: _____ Date: _____

Objectives

1. To recognize difficult or broken relationships in the church.
2. To know when and how to seek forgiveness and to be reconciled with brothers and sisters.
3. To resolve to deal with relational problems as peacemakers rather than to ignore them or flee from them.



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



Read Colossians 3:12-17.



These verses call all believers to live in harmony with one another and to bear with one another. If anyone has a complaint against another, they are to forgive one another. Being a peacemaker should be the norm for every believer in the family of the church. However, the reality is that there will be strife and disagreements among believers.

Because of this, we must always be on our guard to resolve conflict in a Biblical way. In this lesson, we will look at applying the principles we have learned in Lessons 1 to 4 to our relationships with other brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.



MANAGING DISAGREEMENTS



Read Acts 15:36-41.



Disagreements are not always caused by obvious sins or by arguments about Christian doctrine. Sometimes people disagree about the best way to do things, for example whether a certain person is suitable for a certain job. There will always be times when well-intentioned brothers will disagree. How are we as peacemakers to handle ourselves in situations like this?

Paul and Barnabas were about to embark on a second missionary journey to visit and encourage the churches they had founded. A sharp disagreement arose, however, on whether or not to take John, also called Mark, with them. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them again, but Paul did not.



Why did Paul not want to take John, also called Mark (v. 38)?

John Mark had abandoned Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary trip. Paul felt that it was not wise to take someone who had abandoned them in the work.

Note for the group leader:

See Acts 13:13 where John Mark returned to Jerusalem early.



Why do you think Barnabas wanted to take John Mark?

Barnabas wanted to give John Mark a second chance.

Note for the group leader:

Barnabas was known as the son of encouragement (Acts 4:36) and he may have seen great potential in John Mark. He was focused on building up John Mark for future ministry. Paul, on the other hand, was focused on the needs of the mission and wanting to take people along who could weather the trials, tribulations, and hardships they would face. Also, John Mark was Barnabas' cousin (Colossians 4:10). So, Barnabas had a family loyalty to him.



In your estimation, who was right?

There was right and wrong on both sides.

Note for the group leader:

They both had valid reasons for their opinion. These two godly men, both loved by the church and filled with the Holy Spirit, nevertheless had a sharp disagreement.



How was their relationship affected by the 'sharp disagreement'? (Verses 39-40)

They decided to go their separate ways. Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus. Paul took Silas and went to Syria and Cilicia.



Did God bless Paul and Silas? (Acts 16:5) Explain.

Yes, the Church was strengthened in the faith and increased in number.



Did God bless Barnabas and Mark? (2 Tim 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13) Explain.

Yes, Barnabas was correct in taking Mark. Mark became 'useful to Paul' in his ministry and a 'son' to Peter. He also wrote the Gospel of Mark.



How did God use this conflict to advance His plan?

Instead of one missionary team (Paul & Barnabas), there were now two: Paul & Silas, Barnabas & Mark. This meant more opportunities for people to hear the gospel.

Note for the group leader:

Although we do not read of a reconciliation between Barnabas and Paul, we can assume this did indeed happen. In 2 Timothy 4:11 and Colossians 4:10-11, Paul goes out of his way to commend Mark. He also mentions Barnabas in 1 Corinthians 9:6 (a letter written some years after their disagreement) and clearly affirms Barnabas as a fellow apostle with a ministry equal to his own.

② JESUS RESTORES PETER



Read John 21:1-19.



Peter denied Jesus three times after he was arrested. On the day he rose from the dead, Jesus appeared to Peter (Luke 24:34) and then to the eleven, including Peter, that same evening and again the following week. But it is clear that their relationship was not fully restored. Peter still felt guilt and shame. In John 21, we see how Jesus restored Peter and gave him a fresh commission.

Note for the group leader:

You could ask a student to summarize the first six verses:

Peter, with six other disciples, had decided to go back to fishing. Although they had fished all night, they caught nothing... until the man from the shore told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. They caught so many fish, they could not even pull the net back into the boat.



When Peter realized it was the Lord, what did he do? (Verse 7)

He put on his clothes and cast himself into the sea in order to swim to Jesus.



Based on what we have learned in the previous lessons, why do you think Peter did this?

He knew in his heart that he had failed Jesus and he wanted to make up for this. He needed to be assured of Jesus' forgiveness and acceptance.

Note for the group leader:

We have seen that Jesus had already appeared to Peter and the disciples on several occasions but he had not dealt with Peter on this issue. Choosing the right time and place to speak to an offending brother or to confess your sins to a brother you have offended is very important. Sometimes you may be together with them but it is not the right time or place. You should seek to reconcile with your brother as quickly as possible but with wisdom in choosing the time and place.



After breakfast, how many times did Jesus ask Peter if he loved him? (v15-17)

Three times



Why do you suppose Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him?

This was a reminder that Peter had denied him three times.

Note for the group leader:

You may or may not want to mention the use of the following Greek words used in the passage, but be prepared if participants bring it up:

Two different Greek words for 'love' are used in this passage.

In his first two questions, Jesus uses the verb 'agapao'. (The corresponding noun form is 'agape'.) 'Agapao' and 'Agape' are the words for completely unselfish Christian love. John uses 'agapao' in his gospel at 3:16 'God so loved the world...' and Paul uses 'agape' in 1 Corinthians 13 for the love Christians should have for others.

Peter replies all three times with 'phileo'. (The corresponding noun form is 'philos' = friend). In his third question, Jesus also uses 'phileo'. 'Phileo' is also a strong word for the true love of friendship.

It may be that Peter felt unworthy to use 'agapao' to describe his own love for Jesus because of his past failure. So, he humbly affirmed his love for Jesus as a true friend. Even so, Jesus still tested him with his third question: 'Do you love (phileo) me? But Jesus then reaffirmed his commission to him 'Feed my sheep' and warned him of his eventual death as a martyr. Commentators disagree as to how much importance to give to the different Greek words used.



What does Peter answer?

Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.



What does Jesus say that shows that Peter has been restored?

Jesus tells Peter to "feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep". He is restoring Peter to a place of leadership in the early church.



DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION IN THE CHURCH (OPTIONAL)

Note for the group leader:

You will need to decide if this section is helpful for your group at this time.



The Church should not shrink away from dealing with sin but should instead seek to address it. In Matthew 18, we learned about the steps to take to confront a brother or sister in Christ when they have sinned. But what should we do when they repent?



Read 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.



In this passage, we see the reality of sin in the church and the blessing of dealing with it in a biblical way.



Re-read verses 5-6. In the light of Matthew 18:17, what do you think it means when Paul says that this brother had "caused pain to all of you" and "the punishment of the majority is enough"?

This member had sinned publicly and been rebuked publicly by the church in accordance with Matthew 18:15-20.



In verse 7, what does Paul's desire that this man not "be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow" tell us about this man's heart?

This man was sorrowful for his sin and had repented.



What does it tell us about how the Corinthian church was dealing with this man?

They were still excluding him from the fellowship even after he was sorrowful and had repented.



In verses 7-8, what three things does Paul want the Corinthian church to do now that this brother has repented?

He wanted them to forgive him, comfort him, and reaffirm their love for him.

 The purpose of confronting someone about their sin, at any stage in the process of forgiveness and reconciliation, is to bring about the restoration of that brother or sister. If that brother or sister exhibits sorrowful repentance, we should seek to re-establish fellowship, unless there is a clear danger to ourselves or others.

 Re-read verses 9-11. Paul had written to the church urging them to discipline this man because of the offence he had committed. Why was he now anxious to emphasize publicly that he too, as well as the church, had forgiven him?

So that Satan would not get a foothold in the church at Corinth.

Note for the group leader:

When we withhold forgiveness from other believers this allows anger and bitterness to grow. Satan can then draw believers away from each other, from the Church, and even from Christ himself. Extending forgiveness to a brother or sister who repents is also a visual demonstration of the gospel and serves as a great encouragement to other believers. (See Matthew 18:10-14 – where there is great rejoicing when the lost sheep is found).

 Church discipline is an important process that cannot be overlooked or ignored by the church, lest Satan get an advantage over us. It allows believers to be able to live together peaceably.

The goal of church discipline is that the sinner would repent of the sin so that their relationship to the church and other believers could be re-established.

④ PEACE-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES AROUND YOU (GUIDELINES FOR RECONCILING WITH A BROTHER OR SISTER)

 Read the following statements and tick those that are appropriate guidelines to follow:

A. When confronting a brother or sister about a particular offense

- Begin by praying for the Lord to prepare your own heart in loving humility, the brother's heart in receptivity and understanding, and a favorable opportunity to meet and discuss.
- Determine a favorable location where you can speak one-to-one in confidence, yet also in public, especially if there is any possible danger of strong or violent reaction.
- Begin by emphasizing your love for the brother and the importance of your relationship with him.
- Express your feeling of hurt or concern for the other based on the action itself without judging or condemning the other, and invite him/her to explain what happened.
- If the brother does not admit his sin after you have confronted him/her, you should cut off all contact with the person.

Note for the group leader:

First pray for wisdom and discernment to know if indeed your brother has sinned or if you misunderstood. You may want to get back to the brother or sister to discuss or persuade

the brother again. Allow necessary time for the Lord to work in the heart before going to the next step in the steps of restoring peace in Matthew 18:15-20. (See lesson 2.)

If the offender admits his sin and repents, express your forgiveness clearly and verbally for the offense committed.

Make sure you tell your church leaders.

Note for the group leader:

There is no need to do so, unless there is a danger to others. In this case you could encourage the offender to go with you to talk with church leaders and, if necessary, with public authorities also to seek help. However, do tell anyone who already knows about the offense, lest they continue to withhold their confidence or even become bitter. (This could happen if, not knowing that the offender had repented, they thought that he/she had simply got away with it and that the church leaders had not dealt with the offence correctly.) Otherwise, the fewer people who know the better.

B. When asking for forgiveness

Begin by praying that God prepare your heart and the offended brother's.

Confess whatever wrong you can honestly acknowledge without making excuses or justifying your action. Be clear and specific. Express your regret for any harm.

If there has been injury, loss or harm, make restitution when it is in your power to do so. Repay the amount you caused the other to lose and add a bit extra. For instance, if you have stolen \$100, repay perhaps \$120 or offer a service of equivalent value. (See Leviticus 6:4-5.)

C. When reconciling with your brother or sister (See 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.)

Make sure the offender has acknowledged his or her sin and confessed it. If there has been discipline by the church, the offender should also comply with any conditions or actions required by the church leadership. Only then can forgiveness and restoration take place.

Make sure the repentant offender knows he/she is fully forgiven. Likewise, in the case of church discipline, church leaders should declare the forgiveness and restoration publicly, or at least to those who are aware of the offense.

Confirm the restoration with an act of love. Console the person and celebrate his/her restoration.

Remind him/her regularly of the mistake they made to prevent them from doing it again.

Note for the group leader:

Rather treat him/her with honor as a full member of the community. Do not evoke the past sin, and discourage others from doing so also.

Avoid placing the person in a situation of temptation to repeat the offense.

Note for the group leader:

For example, if he or she has had difficulty refraining from stealing, do not appoint him or her as church treasurer.



Optional activities

1. Think of John Mark being given a second chance by Barnabas and later reconciled to Paul. Split into two groups. Each group will imagine a similar situation happening today and prepare a skit showing how to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm someone who has let us down. Play the skits.
2. Spend some time in prayer bringing to God the times when you have let Him down and have failed other people. Then, read aloud or play a recording of John 21:7-19 using one of the following links, for instance. Move the arrow to start at verse 7.
 - [New International Version Dramatized US](#)
 - [New International Version UK](#)

Have two participants mime the actions as they listen again to the passage. Repeat this a few times, changing the actors. Then, spend time thanking God for his forgiveness and restoration.



Applications

1. Take your two lists from the Application Sections of Lessons 2, 3 and 4 (the list of those you have offended and from whom you may still need to ask forgiveness and the list of those who have offended you. You may have forgiven them or perhaps you still need to forgive them or to speak to them directly so that you can be reconciled).
Now, pray and ask God to show you if there are any relationships you need to restore. Ask God to give you wisdom and grace as you seek to rebuild this broken relationship. Ask Him what steps you should take to seek out this person. You may need to ask for his/her forgiveness or to confront him/her with the offense they have caused you. Pray that it will be possible for you to be reconciled.
In groups of two, share what God has shown you (in as much detail as is appropriate). Then, pray for each other.
2. In the coming days, stay in touch with your prayer partner, be accountable to one another and pray for each other as you take concrete steps towards reconciliation.

Note for the group leader

Next week, the group will have the opportunity to compose a song summarising what they have learned during the course and illustrating how it has affected their lives. Tell them to bring their instruments if they wish to use them for this activity.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



Lesson 6: Ambassadors of God and Peacemakers

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson Objectives

1. To recognize our great privilege and responsibility to represent Christ as his ambassador in the world.
2. To commit to becoming a peace-maker, reconciling others to God and to each other.
3. To recognize our anger and bitterness and to be ready to forgive, especially when hurts have been caused by unbelievers, and to commit to turning these into opportunities to introduce them to Christ.
4. To determine who we need to engage within our circle of relationships and what actions to take to encourage them to be reconciled to God.



How are you getting on?

1. What were the main points of the last lesson?
2. What happened when you shared with others what you learned?
3. What changed in your lives as a result of these teachings?



In Matthew 5:9, Jesus tells his disciples, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God.” Restoring peace is an essential calling of the disciple of Christ.

Notice the expression “peacemaker”. It is something we must do. This is not something that is going to happen on its own. It is interesting to notice that our sinful nature turns us into peace-breakers rather than peacemakers. This can be seen in the world today, just as it could be seen in Jesus’ time. As a result of sin, people shatter peace only too easily.

In Lesson 1, we considered the great loving sacrifice Christ made on our behalf to enable us to be reconciled to God (Romans 5:8-10). Then, in Lesson 5, we saw how we need to work at making peace with our brothers and sisters to preserve the unity of the Body of Christ, our Christian family. In this lesson, we will look at our responsibility to encourage those outside of the faith to come to Christ for forgiveness and reconciliation and to discover peace with God.



Read attentively 2 Corinthians 5:16 – 6:2.



In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, the apostle Paul states that God gave him and his companions a ministry. What is this ministry?

Reconciliation



Give a definition of this key word. You can refer back to lesson one.

The restoration of the broken relationship between God and man through the sacrificial death of Jesus. A change from enmity and estrangement from God to harmony and fellowship with Him.



Below is a list of key words from lesson one which we find also in this passage. Write a short biblical definition below each word. Then, check and complete your answers with the definitions in lesson 1.

- Trespasses/sin (verses 19 and 21):
A transgression of God's law resulting in spiritual death and separation from God.
 - Forgiveness (verse 19):
Not counting his/her trespasses against someone; releasing someone from the requirement to repay a debt owed or be punished for an offense.
 - Righteousness (verse 21):
Having a right standing before the Holy God and being fully acceptable to Him.
 - Justification (verse 21):
Becoming the righteousness of God in Jesus; the act of God, the just judge, who acquits the guilty sinner of all charges and declares him innocent, (because Christ has paid the full penalty for his sins on the cross).
-



Who is entrusted with this ministry today?

All those who have accepted Christ, and so been reconciled to God and become a 'new creation'. (Verse 17)

As with the apostle Paul, God has not only reconciled us but he also gives us the ministry of reconciliation. (Verse 18)



Who receives the benefit of this ministry?

All those in this hostile, rebellious world who come to God through faith in Christ and his sacrifice, asking to be reconciled.



What benefits do they receive?

God will make them become new creations, making all things new from inside out: their nature, motives and heart attitude. (Verse 17)

God will not count their offenses against them. In other words, God will make his hostility and divine wrath towards them to disappear. (Verse 19)

He will reconcile them, restoring their access to God in prayer and making peace with them. (Verse 21)

He will declare them to be righteous, having removed their guilt of sin and transferred it to Christ's account. (Verse 21)



What is the role of an ambassador?

To represent the one who sent him/her. His roles include...

- *dwelling in another kingdom/country and learning their ways.*
 - *building understanding, trust and respect between his native country and the host country.*
 - *transferring official messages between the leadership of each country.*
 - *executing the orders of his own king or president.*
-



As ambassadors for Christ, what is our responsibility?

We need to make the message known to mankind that God is ready to forgive their offenses—not judge them in wrath—but restore their relationship if they come and ask Him, accepting Christ’s sacrifice on their behalf. Further, we need to beseech and implore them out of love to act, knowing that when they do, their situation will change for eternity from suffering God’s wrath to enjoying peace with God. And so, we will become instruments of reconciliation on behalf of Christ.



Just how important is this ministry?

No ministry responsibility on earth could be more important, as it critically affects the welfare of those created in God’s image not just in this world but for all eternity.



As ambassadors of Christ, to whom should we reach out? Who should we urge to be reconciled to God? Tick all that apply in the list below:



Members of our family (See Acts 16:31.)



Our friends



Our neighbors



Those who hate us and persecute us (See Matthew 5:44.)



Leaders and authorities (see Mt 10:18)



Those who have never heard the Gospel throughout the world (see Mt 28:18-19)

Note for the group leader:

Christ wants to reconcile everyone in the world and He sends those who have already been reconciled as ambassadors until all have been invited to be reconciled to God by hearing the Gospel message. This task can best be carried out in association with other brothers and sisters in your church community and elsewhere.



Try to complete from memory the following verses taken from Romans 12:20-21. Then, check your answer.

If your enemy is hungry, feed him.

If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. (...)

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.



By forgiving our unbelieving loved ones and enemies, by showing acts of kindness in Christ’s name, by encouraging all to reconcile with God, we demonstrate the power of the Gospel to reconcile in a visible manner.



Optional activity

1. Think again of the different tasks of an ambassador. Then, discuss what it means in practice to be an ambassador of Christ to those around you.

2. Watch the following wordless [video](#) showing how we can turn the hurt caused by our enemies into opportunities to build bridges. Then, pray and ask God to show you which bridges you could build to reach out to those who oppose you or have hurt you.

Short, simple animation –1 minute

3. Watch the following [video](#) showing believers being sent to share the gospel to those who have never heard it. As a group, discuss which people you could be sent to.

Powerful challenge from Loren Cunningham, founder of YWAM – 4 minutes



Applications

1. Think of those who are unbelievers in your life and sphere of influence. This may include some people who have hurt you or oppose you now. Write down their names, pray for each one and for your relationship with them. Ask God to show you what He wants you to do. In groups of two, share about the people you put on your list. Then, pray together for God to prepare hearts and open an opportunity for you to be an ambassador of Christ to them.
2. In the coming days, look for opportunities to exercise the ministry of reconciliation by sharing the Gospel with those you meet.



Review of Course 111

Review the six lessons of this Course. As a group, compose a song summarising what you have learned and illustrating how it has affected your lives.



Sharing

This week, share with others what you have learned in this lesson. You can also redo the lesson with someone.



End of Course Evaluation

Please note:

This End of Course Evaluation is there to help you improve your skills as a group leader.

Put a check next to the issues that you need to work on.

You may want to discuss some of these with your mentor/coordinator.

Number of the Course that you finished teaching:

Title of the Course:

Think about the following questions:

A. This course

Is there something that was not covered sufficiently or that you need to cover again in this course? What are you going to do about it?

B. Your role as a group leader

Is there anything you should change in the way you prepare your lessons?

Is there anything you should change in your teaching method? (Are you leading the students to discover the answers for themselves?)

Is there anything you should change in your attitude as a group leader? (Are you dominating or moderating the group?)

C. Preparation and participation

Are the students attending the meetings regularly? If this is not the case, why not? Is there anything that can be done to enable them to do so?

Are the students preparing their answers thoughtfully before coming and eager to share what they've learned? What can you do to encourage and further motivate them?

D. Group dynamics

Are there students who do not participate or do not feel free to share at a deeper level in the group? If this is the case, why?

Are there some who cause problems in the group? In what way? How can you deal with that?

Are the students taking responsibilities within the group and serving others using their gifts? If not, what can you do to encourage this?

E. Review & progress evaluation

Are you ensuring students can understand and express what they have studied? If so, how?

- Answers in class Review questions Oral exam Written exam

Are you keeping a record of the students' progress? If so, how?

- Attendance Students' workbooks Exams Course register Student register

Are students achieving in their evaluations? If not, why not? How can you help them improve?

F. Application

Are your students putting the biblical truths into practice? If not, why not?

What difficulties are your students facing on their spiritual journey? How could you help them overcome these difficulties?

Does anyone need personal follow-up? If you cannot do this, whom could you ask?

G. Multiplication

Are the participants sharing with others about what they learned? If not, how could you help them to do this?

Are others seeking to join a study group? If so, how can you best integrate the newcomers?

Have you identified any participants who could become future group leaders? How are you going to equip them?

H. Further group leader training & equipping

Note any areas you would like to receive further training in.

What else would you like to discuss with your mentor/coordinator?

What next?

- ✓ Praise God and intercede for each of your students.
- ✓ Pray for your own ministry as a discipleship group leader.
- ✓ Look at each of the issues that you want to work on. Decide what you have to do to address these issues. Then start implementing the necessary changes.
- ✓ If you want to discuss something, make an appointment with your mentor/coordinator.

We would love to hear about your experiences as you taught this Course.

Please contact the Progressing Together team: info@progressingtogether.com