

Horizontal Forgiveness: Forgiving Other People

Read the account of David and Saul in 1 Samuel 24. Pay attention to the details and try to imagine yourself in this situation.

1. As the video explained, David was on the run from King Saul who had caused a lot of trouble and pain in his life. Take some time and think about a person who is a "Saul" in your life. How did they hurt you and how has it affected you? How do you feel towards them right now? Write down some specific things to acknowledge them to yourself and to God.
2. In the scripture passage, David spoke to Saul directly. In our lives more often than not, we will not be able to speak to the person we need to forgive directly. It will be an internal forgiveness between us and God. Think of some reasons why it might be good to forgive the person directly and some reasons why it might be a bad decision to approach them face to face.
3. Re-read verses 7-8. How did David approach Saul in these verses? Is it possible for you to offer mercy and respect to the "Saul" in your life at this point? If that's difficult, maybe you can start by asking God for the **desire** to be merciful and respectful.
4. In the video it talked about some things that forgiveness is not:
 - Forgiveness is not forgetting.
 - Forgiveness is not something that always makes the pain go away.
 - Forgiveness is not to stop longing for justice, it just means putting the outcome in God's hands. Verses 12-13
 - Forgiveness does not mean you make it easy to be hurt again. Verse 22
 - Forgiveness is not a onetime event.

Have you ever thought about forgiveness in this way before? Ask God to help you trust Him to deal justly, overcome the damage, protect you from further hurt, and to fully release your heart and mind from bitterness and anger.

5. The video states that “forgiveness make us stronger.” Write down at least three ways that forgiving someone would make you stronger.

6. A simple prayer for the Saul in your life: “Heavenly Father you know this person has wronged me just as I have wronged others. I give my anger and bitterness to you, I give you my right to vengeance and justice in this matter and trust your outcome. I pray for your very best for this person, that they would come into a saving relationship with you and I ask you to keep me safe from future damage and help me to deal both humbly and with wisdom in dealing with this person. Amen

Vertical Forgiveness: God Forgives Us

Read Luke's account of Jesus' crucifixion in Luke 23. Pay attention to the details and try to imagine yourself in Jesus' situation.

1. In Luke 23:34 Christ says "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Who is He talking about? Had anyone asked for forgiveness? Was he only talking about the people that were there or does His forgiveness extend further? What do you think this might mean about God's forgiveness?
2. As you picture the crucifixion, think about how the two criminals represent the only two options we have regarding the forgiveness offered to us through Christ (Luke 23:39-43). We can either respond in mockery and disbelief, or we can acknowledge our wrongdoing and humbly ask for God's mercy. Which of those two crosses do you see yourself hanging on?
3. Both men alongside Jesus actually cried out to Him to be saved. Notice that Jesus doesn't respond to the criminal who demands that Jesus save him. Why do you think that is? What was different about the prayer of the criminal who recognized Jesus as the Savior?
4. God's forgiveness is free. The only cost is humility. It cannot be demanded or manipulated by the perpetrator. How does that line up with the two men crucified alongside Jesus?
5. Why do you think God requires us to forgive others in order to be forgiven ourselves? Can we really experience His grace and mercy if we are full of anger, bitterness, and vengeance ourselves?
6. Sue stated that "God's forgiveness offers freedom but it doesn't always bring reconciliation." Sometimes we have hurt people too deeply or damaged things to such an extent that we won't see resolution in this life. Do you recognize any circumstances like that in your life? How does that make you feel? Colossians 1:19-20 says: "*For in Him all the fullness of God was*

pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.” One way to look at this passage is to realize that we can leave those unreconciled, unfixable situations in the hands of Christ who has already reconciled all things to Himself.

7. It is humbling to think that Christ is still interceding for us *“Father forgive them, they don't know what they're doing.”* 1 John 1:8-9 says *“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* It's easy to deceive ourselves. But deep down, we know the wrong that is often in our hearts. Humbly admit these things to God. Trust in the mercy and forgiveness extended through Jesus' death on the cross. He is faithful and just to forgive and help us move forward in His righteousness.