

BIG IDEA SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Small groups that focus on the Big Idea for the week can use this guide to apply the message to life and take action. Feel free to use whatever parts of this guide best fit your group personality and time frame. Do NOT feel like you have to use every question. All verses, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version (NIV).

5.30/31.09 // FIREPROOF MY MARRIAGE: MARRIAGE TAKES 2 GOOD FORGIVERS BIG IDEA: Seeking & offering forgiveness brings healing to relationships

Some of this material is adapted from the *Fireproof Your Marriage* small group curriculum (outreach.com)

// Ice Breaker _____

Option 1: Relate a time when you were younger that you gave or received payback/revenge for a wrong done.

Option 2: Elton John sang, "Sorry seems to be the hardest word." Why is saying "I'm sorry" so difficult sometimes?

// Questions for Discussion _____

1 Forgiveness feels great—as long as we're the beneficiaries. We like being forgiven, but it's not very fun when you have to ask for forgiveness. What holds people back from forgiving?

2 How do you react when your spouse expresses concern about something you did or neglected to do? Do you respond with humility and gratitude for being given the opportunity to change and improve your marriage (no, that is not a joke)? Or are you more likely to bring up his/her faults, and launch an accusation of your own: "Oh yeah, well let me tell you what you did!" Why and how is this significant?

3 Do Jesus' teachings portray forgiveness as just a feeling or as something that requires a deliberate decision? What indicates forgiveness might also require action?

Matthew 5:23-24

²³Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Mark 11:15-16

²⁵And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

4 When and how does God forgive us? Is it unconditional?

1 John 1:8-9

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

5 Are we called to forgive unconditionally? If not, what are the conditions? What makes these conditions necessary or important? Can you have a "forgiving spirit" and yet withhold forgiveness? How so?

Luke 17:3-4

"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

6 Is it possible to forgive someone fully if they have not asked for it? Does this deal with the sin/wrong in a just way? Does it show real love to ignore the sin? Does it minimize and even

condone the sin if it is not dealt with? In what circumstances is it possible to forgive someone without their confession and repentance?

Luke 23:33-34

³³When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

7 In the "Lord's Prayer," Jesus teaches us to forgive "debts". Some translations say "trespasses." What do these words bring to mind?

Matthew 6:12

¹²Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

8 How does unforgiveness affect your relationship with God?

Matthew 6:14-15

¹⁴For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

9 Have you ever thought that your wrongs against others, or their wrongs against you, were first wrongs against God? How can that perspective change our responses to wrong?

10 Are there times when living at peace with someone is not possible and may not depend on you? What does it mean to "leave room for God's wrath"?

Romans 12:18-19

¹⁸If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"^a says the Lord.

11 What's the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation? Is reconciliation necessary after forgiveness has taken place? What circumstances make reconciliation very difficult, if not impossible?

Romans 5:10

¹⁰For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

12 What are the benefits of forgiving: spiritually, emotionally and physically?

// Application _____

Commit to memory Colossians 3:13 -

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

When someone we love sins against us, it can cause deep hurt. In that type of situation, forgiveness might be an on-going process. Even when we forgive, the feelings of hurt and anger can resurface, especially if their sinful behavior occurs multiple times, or if we encounter a reminder of old wounds. How does Jesus' answer of 77 times apply (Matthew 18:21-35)? Is there something in your marriage that might make forgiveness take some time or be an on-going process?

Is it up to you to cause your spouse to change, or is God able and willing to transform your mate? How can this promise change how you treat your husband or wife? Is there any way in which you are trying to forced your spouse to change, either by your actions or words?

Philippians 1:6

being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

// Prayer_____

Pray that God reveals anything you've done to hurt or offend someone, and helps you to seek forgiveness.

Pray that God reveals anything you need to forgive, and be willing to offer it.