**Introduction:**

***“Forgiveness is a focus on the present that frees us from the past and opens up the future.”***

1. **Definition of forgiveness- the action or process of forgiving or being forgiven.**
2. **To wipe the slate**
3. **To cease to feel resentment against (an offender) forgive one’s enemies.**
4. **Giving up the right to hurt someone, for hurting yourself.**
5. **To give up resentment of or claim to requital. Forgive an insult.**
6. **To grant relief from payment. Forgive a debt Matthew 18:21-35 The Parable of the unmerciful servant.**
7. **To give up the false for the true.**
8. **Erasing sin and error from the mind and body. (You must cease to commit the sin)**
* **Biblical Reference and Discussion: Ephesians 1:7, and Colossians 1:14, Matthew 6:12, Matthew 6:14, Mark 2:10, Mark 4:12, Acts 26:18**
1. **The definition of forgiveness in the bible is expressed through the study.**
2. **To Forgive**
3. **to break destructive cycles of hatred, violence, and ethnic negative feelings throughout the world.**

**\*Question: In what ways are we carrying cycles of hatred, violence, ethnic prevalent actions, thoughts, and words in the world?**

**B. We must change our minds about unforgiveness in history (society racial, sex, and family generations)**

**C. Unforgiveness of the leadership (government, supervisors, religious, and organizational leaders.)**

**D. Change our attitude which allows us to let go of anger and resentment by deciding to absolve what is perceived as wrong by self or others. (Meaning recognize how your attitude and beliefs of the actual situation.**

**E. You must make the decision to overcome any unforgiveness or resentment in your past and present. (You must not choose to overcome through obligation, it must come out of love and compassion.)**

**\*Question: What measure do you take to analyze the issue of how you view the belief of a situation from your past or current conflict?**

**\*Question: What do you do with the information from your analysis and how do you start the healing process of forgiveness of the information that you determined?**

* **Biblical Reference and Discussion: Racial discrimination, Reference Civil Rights Error. Racial statements from others in other countries.**
* **Opinions on the sexuality of others.**
* **Opinions on government decisions or actions.**
* **Opinions on other religions and practices.**
* **The actions against the believers of Jesus Christ. Book Reference and Discussion: Acts 4:1-22, Acts 7: 54-60, Acts 9: 1-31.**

**2. The Past unforgiveness and have you forgiven now?**

**Unforgiveness contains a person that has suffered a deep hurt, such as betrayal which creates anger and or resentment.**

**A. Do our pain partly caused by the fear of forgetting the past?**

**B. How are you remembering your past that keeps you from releasing the burdens so that you can move forward and live a new way?**

**C. What feelings do you have that determine that you are dealing with areas of your life that involve unforgiveness?**

**\*Quote Hannah Arendt (Jewish philosopher) from the text The Human Condition (1958) “ *Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to a single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever, not unlike the sorcerer’s apprentice who lacked the magic formula to break the spell.***

**D. Discussion: How do you look at unforgiveness in your life as an agent of wrongdoing, victim of wrongdoing, or both?**

* **Agent of a belief of a person can be based on the belief that a person can judge events, situations, or past issues and measure the magnitude of the offense and decide to receive an equal amount of retribution to balance the account. (Meaning makes a judgment and decides based on the belief of how the person or situation shall be punished.)**
* **Some people are held to the consequences of their past, including unforgiveness of self or unforgiveness of wrongdoing from others.**
* **This chain keeps us from forgiving ourselves, as we would continue to reflect on the acts committed without accepting the release.**

**\*Question “After reading the information above, what do you think your current position as the agent of wrong-doing, or victim of wrongdoing as an effect of unforgiveness in your life today as well as in society?**

* ***Only through releasing others from what we have done or what others have done to us as well as a willingness to change our minds and start again can reconstruct societies. (Discussion)***
* **People that hold onto grievances cannot forgive; they will never have the freedom of vision to create a different society.**
* **Forgiveness entails owning our pain and taking responsibility for our thoughts and beliefs by cutting through our connection to the untrue thoughts that we hide within ourselves and casting the blame on others for unresolved issues that we see in ourselves.**

**3. Judgement and Unforgiveness**

**Judgments and perceptions are based on our emotions, needs, and desires at the time of the situation. (They are not facts although we want to interpret them as such)**

**\*Question: Why do you think judgments of another, or situation are not facts?**

* **Judgement can be considered a person looking at a situation that he or she feels is wrong, and immediately accepts the belief and defines the person as being that very act that person is judged as.**
* **The person lacks understanding of the error and condemns without a thought of change or long-term view and punishment of the act.**
* **Believes that the act that is judged defines who that person is. (negative labeling)**

**\*Question: After reading the characteristics of judgment, do you believe that you are judgmental and what are you willing to do to change? Judgment causes the disease of unforgiveness.**

**One must change from judgment as forgiveness is overcoming the negative effect toward the offender. This awareness is not by denying ourselves the right to such effect and judgment, but by endeavoring to view the offender with compassion, benevolence, and love while recognizing that he or she has abandoned the right to them.**

**When an individual lets go of his or her feelings of anger, hatred, or need for revenge, it is they who are healed. The first step is accepting and coming to terms with what took place, those who can see the situation from a perspective of understanding and compassion can lay the past to rest and experience inner peace.**

* **We judge and attack others, not realizing that what we have attacked in others we have condemned in ourselves. As a result, we can only see our own unacceptable parts in others, setting up situations of discrimination, scapegoating, victimization, and even war.**
* **We must come to an awareness of the areas in our thinking and emotions first to be able to see others differently and forgive in fullness and not partial.**

**Open Discussion: After reading the information above, how do you see others through the lens of yourself? Are there issues or conflicts that you need to confess and work on within yourself? Do you need to be free from any past situations or people?**

**4. Importance of Forgiveness**

* **Restores harmony among you and someone else.**
* **Solves issues with the history and past events that may not include you but involve others. (Racial historical events.) We must heal through the forgiveness of long-lasting injury or hurt from historical periods that did not involve us. We must learn to open our hearts to humanity and understand the sufferings of others at a greater level; in other words, we learn compassion.**
* **We must have an awareness of how we create an enemy and the judgment or projections that we have accepted them as. (To perform the forgiveness process, we must evaluate our projections and judgments. We must embrace the total view of who we are, our perceptions of others in the world do change.)**
* **We cannot change the event itself, but we can change the meaning we give the event or that what we have accepted the unforgiveness upon. (Discussion)**
* **Forgiveness is possible only when a person has a sense of justice.**
1. **You cannot feel a deep sense of moral injury without a sense of fairness. (Meaning you must see both sides reconciled in forgiveness for the process to be complete)**
2. **As you gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of forgiveness, justice takes a new meaning, for we begin to see the situation or dispute as well as the world differently.**
* **When we feel attacked by someone, that sensitive part of ourselves is touched, but the attacking person is not the cause of the wound that is experienced.**
* **The perceptions and beliefs that we carry and interpret with emotions, in what we see do not really exist. It is the interpretation we create in our mind and emotions that become the problem; therefore, our interpretation is the key that needs to be changed. (Further Discussion)**
* **We find that the wounds existed long before the conflicts or issues experienced with others. If we felt secure loving within ourselves, the attack would have no effect on us. Therefore, our perception of our attacker would be different. We would recognize his or her weakness and act accordingly.**
* **This does not say that others do not commit wrongful acts, but we are able to see these actions in a different light and that the attacker’s actions come from an inner place of weakness.**

**5. Mental Healing Forgiveness**

* **Through mental forgiveness we are aligned with the purpose that it is a way of life. Its transformational level moves us from being helpless victim of our circumstances to a wonderful co-creator of our reality.**
* **We are to learn how to see people with fresh eyes, visioning them anew every day in terms of their future potential, not their past trials.**
* **Sometimes we are centered in unforgiveness in thinking that our offenders are to apologize. (The offender need not apologize) Otherwise, the injured party’s healing from hurt through forgiveness would rely on the offender’s regret. Discussion – Do you think that the offender understands the lesson in the offensive nature of the injured party? Or the offender apologizes through regret, and it becomes unforgiveness of themselves.**
1. **Pass the guilt and the unforgiveness down, the injured in healed but the offender is damaged**
* ***Forgiveness is not condoning* Certain behaviors, such as unprovoked violence, abuse, and aggression, are totally unacceptable.**
1. **The most compassionate acts require taking action to stop the behaviors and to prevent the behaviors from happening again.**
2. **Forgiveness does not mean that you support the behaviors which cause pain to yourself and others. It does not mean that you don’t take action to change a situation or protect yourself or others.**
3. **The Special thought to have about forgiveness is that it is a process that happens internally on a personal level. (Remember you do not have to accept someone else behavior in order to forgive.**
* ***Forgiveness is not reconciliation* Forgiveness is a personal internal release that only involves oneself.**
1. **Forgiveness may be a necessary step in bringing people together to reconcile and includes a willingness to reconcile, but it only involves ourselves.**
2. **Reconciliation is coming together of two or more people to forgive the ones that are involved and demonstrate the behavior of the ones that have the understanding to take responsibility and heal any unforgiveness that is within themselves. We cannot reconcile the offenders until the offenders have aligned with the understanding to reconcile any unforgiveness in themselves.**
3. **Forgiveness may not take place at the same time; therefore this statement is true: We can forgive someone but it does not mean we have to reconcile.**
* **Psychological Defense**
* ***Rationalization: consciously unconsciously concealing your true motivation by explaining your actions and feelings to make them appear more acceptable (to others or to self)***
* ***Repression: the burying of a painful feeling or thought from one's conscious awareness***
* ***Denial: refusing to acknowledge or comprehend external factual events***
* ***Projection: attributing one’s own unacceptable thoughts, feelings and motives to another person***
* ***Displacement: satisfying an impulse with a substitute object (e.g. acting out anger with your spouse by kicking the dog)***
* ***Regression: acting with reduced maturity in the face of stress or anxiety***

***\*\*\** The process begins when we allow ourselves to look at our own psychological defenses and to feel the anger, hurt, and pain. Until we ae able to do this, we stay trapped in emotional undercurrents. /only when we recognize our pain, is when we can move on and look more closely at what is underneath.**

* **Examining the different parts of the psychological defense**
1. **Denial is the refusal to accept things the way they are. We do not want to see what is true about ourselves or the situations that exist in our lives.**
2. **Our self-righteousness, pride, feelings of insecurity, or fear are some of the reasons which cloud our ability to situations clearly and differently with an open mind.**
3. **When we learn to accept, we learn to forgive, for acceptance is the path of forgiveness.**
4. **When we have no awareness at all of our unacceptable feelings or desires, we are using the defense mechanism of *repression.***
5. **We do not necessarily choose to repress our feelings but do so on an unconscious level when we believe that it would be too unsafe or terrifying to allow these memories or emotions to surface.**
6. **When we repress our emotions, they usually manifest themselves in other ways, such as anxiety attacks, physical symptoms, or negative emotions towards other individuals or groups.**
7. **When we are using *projection*, we are disowning our feelings and unconsciously accepting them as an untrue event to a part of us.**
8. **We began to categorize people or persons in our life as they are having the feeling that we have accepted within ourselves as truth but untrue.**
9. **Special Passage: “The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that. It is the witness of your state of mind, the outside picture of an inward condition. As a man think, so does he perceive. Therefore, seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world.**
10. **Through projection you view the world through the eyes of anger, fear, guilt, desires, and needs.**
11. **What we experience we accept to be the final phase is discriminated in all that may have a connection or similarity to it.**
* **Examine ourselves – In our willingness to look beneath our pain we are taking the first step in breaking the cycle of hatred and fear.**
* **This process of self-inquiry requires a willingness to explore the workings and origins of our own defense, mechanisms, especially denial and repression, even when we work with trauma, abuse, or in a conflictual situation that appears unresolvable.**
* **We use denial and repression to evade our pain and the sadness anger and guilt which are buried deep within our consciousness. When we face our pain, it gives us courage and strength.**
* **Other parts of forgiveness consist of acknowledging our feelings of guilt. Guilt is a psychological experience of everything we judge as being unacceptable within ourselves.**
* **This feeling can be a sensation of the belief that there is something wrong with us, and because of our reprehensible nature we need to be punished.**
* **Guilt is important to understand because it is a very strong motivating factor in our behavior.**
* **Guilt is defined in this text as not being aware of what we have done to someone else or how we treat others but it highlights the negative beliefs we hold about ourselves, our feelings of unworthiness, our insecurities, inadequacies, and so forth.**
* **Thus, we attack and blame others for the weakness we cannot accept in ourselves, becoming blind to our own shortcomings.**
* **After we have acknowledged our anger and fear. We must look at what within ourselves is preventing us from further healing. This can be very difficult as you will have to fight to heal from the feelings of denial and projections that were difficult for you to face.**
* **When we continue to allow ourselves to conceal our feelings of guilt, fear, pain, and anger, we will be self-destruction to ourselves and continue to divert from the true source of the problem, which is ourselves onto others that would be the true victims.**
* **Whatever you see in someone else is the reflection of something that you are having trouble accepting in yourself.**

**6. Emotional Healing forgiveness**

* **Forgiveness in some cases may not only restore the relationship to its original quality but enhance that quality. This is the healing quality of forgiveness which has the ability to touch our soul and transform our relationships from that which is based on hatred to change in love.**
* **In becoming more loving, compassionate, and understanding human beings, we gain the ability to have a deeper relationship with ourselves and the people in our lives.**
* ***Forgiveness is not pardoning*. Forgiveness is an inner emotional release. Pardoning is a public behavioral release.**
1. **Pardon is viewed as breaking the law, rules, trust of a system or person that results in punishment reduced or suspended to a later time.**
* **Victimization – involves a complex mental, emotional, and social mechanism by which a person or people claim righteousness and purity, attribute hostility and evil to the enemy.**
* **The process begins with distinguishing the good self in which you identify of yourself and the bad self that is experienced on an unconscious level as this type of thinking is focused on a projected enemy.**
* **We must clear victimization in ourselves as we can find ourselves casting the guilt, blame, and responsibility on others.**
* **To blame is to deny both one’s responsibility and one’s potency. Blame produces blame creating a feedback system based on shared delusions.**
* **If we do not take the responsibility to come into the reality of the blame or issues within ourselves, we will continue to create and face adversaries that are not all the source of the enemy. (Recognize when you are wrong more frequently will decrease conflict)**

**\*\*\* Discussion: How do we view a person that is well liked by everyone and very rare of confrontation from others. What do you think they believe and practice to continue a strong peace that they live?**

* ***Victimization is always reactionary*. It is a drama which takes place between two or more parties who feel powerless to do anything themselves except respond to aggressive initiatives of the other and to demonstrate their superiority.**
* **Greed, cruelty and hostility is known as the shadow of yourself. (Why do you think that it is a part of a shadow of yourself?) Discussion**
* **These parts referenced in the previous bullet are made to disappear and are recognized only as the qualities of the enemy.**

**7. Injustice and Suffering**

* **Injustice and suffering can be caused by *Anger* that we direct towards others indicating our attempt to change their behavior so that we do not have to acknowledge our shortcomings.**
* **We have judged our shortcomings to be unacceptable to us and so we make others feel guilty in order to get them to stop what they are doing.**
* **We can recognize this behavior on a personal level when someone is directly hostile to us, and also on an international level when we see innocent people being oppressed or persecuted.**
* **We must understand what the meaning of injustice and suffering to determine in what ways that we must intervene with ourselves and feeling as well as with others to require outside health if that is needed.**
1. **Reactions from our feelings of injustice and suffering.**
* **Our first reaction to someone being treated unjustly, whether it be ourselves, significant others in our lives, or people living in foreign countries, make us believe that the perpetrator should be punished. The lesson we are teaching, then, is that people should not hurt others because it makes us angry, and we do not approve of it or them.**
* **These actions are considered evil, therefore so are the people committing them. \*\*\*\* Discussion: Do you agree with the statement and do you carry on this behavior?**
* **Although people and circumstances can create situations that lead to suffering, we alone are responsible for our own beliefs concerning these circumstances.**
* **We are to perceive acts of injustice as arising from weakness and fear, and we call for help to recognize that this injustice (of a situation) is not necessarily evil.**
* **Our thoughts and beliefs can cause us our greatest pain or bring us healing.**
* **The less that we are to teach that everyone is worthy of our love, regardless of their actions.**
* **There is no cause beyond yourself that can reach down and bring oppression. No one but you affect yourself.**
* **A person who feels love within himself would want to demonstrate this love to those who do not know it.**
* **This does not mean that we allow the injustice to continue to approve of the actions of the victimizer.**
* **This technique is a different way of thinking, which recognizes the importance of expanding the circle of help to include not only those who suffer, but also the ones who seem to be causing suffering.**

**8. Grace and Forgiveness**

* **Grace is that inexplicable power which comes from God giving us the ability to forgive, when we feel that within our heart’s forgiveness is humanly impossible.**
* **Instantly we move from a heart in bondage to experiencing a well spring of love for our enemy.**
* **Grace is experiencing the power of God given love working in us, and through us. In these moments we are able to accept someone for who they are, not what they have done.**
* **When forgiveness happens as a result of grace, we experience the power of something greater than our small selves working in us and through us.**

**\*\*\*Define Grace in the spiritual of what it means from God and what we have the ability to do with our brothers and sisters to forgive them from our heart.**

**Open Discussion: Grace and Forgiveness**