

I. ME

- A. Welcome
- B. Half way through series
 - 1. Designed to need each other
 - 2. And to be better when we are together.
- 3. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**
- C. The problem is that in order to be better together we have to be together and that doesn't always seem better.

D. Example- GAME- Whisper Challenge

II. WE

- A. Better together doesn't always seem better
 - 1. There are misunderstandings and miscommunications
 - 2. There are differing/opposing priorities and views
 - 3. There are selfish jerks.
 - 4. You get hurt. You "inadvertently" hurt others
 - 5. Be with anyone long enough and they will hurt you.**
- B. People hurt each other.
 - 1. The most pain you've experienced wasn't physical but relational.
 - 2. Scars that last decades, lifetimes.
 - 3. The hardest pain to heal from is relational.**
- C. Relational pain changes you
 - 1. It clings to you
 - 2. Alters your thinking and how you treat people.
 - 3. Become bitter, angry, irritable
- D. But the truth is... we are still better together.
 - 1. How do we deal the fact that we work best when we are in relationships with people... and those people are guaranteed to hurt us?

E. Options

- 1. **Move on** to someone else and see if they are the only perfect human who will never hurt you.
 - a. Why many people have a trail of broken relationships and friendships
 - 2. **Nag/complain/fight** to change the people you are with hoping they will change.
 - 3. **Close yourself off**. Don't leave them. Don't argue. Just exist together.
 - 4. None of these ultimately work.
 - 5. None of these help us actually become and be better together.
- F. **There's another solution.**
- 1. Not easy... Might seem impossible
 - 2. But if you figure it out... every single relationship you have will be better, which will make your life better.
 - 3. It's one of the secrets to a happy life...
- G. Found in Ephesians
- 1. A letter Paul wrote to ancient Jesus-Followers around 60 AD
 - 2. What it means to be a Jesus-Follower and follow the Law of Love
 - 3. Lays out how we can be better together even though we will hurt each other.

III. GOD (Ephesians 4:31-32)

A. V. 31

1. Easy. Done. See you later.
 2. Should be easy... isn't this what we all really want?
 3. Don't you want a marriage, workplace, home, friendship, relationship, country like this?
 4. But it's not easy... otherwise these wouldn't be so common.
 5. See it all the time,
 6. Exactly what we see in the political discourse today.
 7. Often shows up in churches... why you might have left.
- B. These all are the common responses to being hurt... aren't they?
1. **Bitterness**- Every time you see them, or even think about them you get that festering, blahg, feeling.
 - a. You can't help but remember what they did to you... you can't stand the thought of them.
 2. **Rage and Anger**- You trusted them. And they hurt you. You did everything for them and they took advantage. They were supposed to protect you and they abandoned you... HOW DARE THEY!!
 3. **Brawling**- Pick a fight every chance you get. They don't deserve a moments peace
 4. **Slander**- Make sure that everyone knows who they really are and what they have done
 5. **Malice**- Trying to find a way to hurt them b/c they have hurt you.
- C. If you've ever been truly hurt by someone, you know these feelings.

- D. Paul says, "Stop it." -- Never that easy.
1. Especially when you don't want to stop it.
- E. Be honest... you want to hang on to these... you want to make them pay, you want them to know how much they hurt you, you want them to feel it as deeply as you do...
1. Except that it won't work out that way.
 2. It might bother them a bit, make them uncomfortable,
 3. But it will never make them feel the way you do
 4. All it will do is grow those feelings inside of **you** until you can't control them and they control you.

5. Holding on to hurts only hurts you.

- F. So just let go? Stop feeling the feelings?
1. NOT WHAT PAUL IS SAYING. - Let him finish his thought.
- G. **V. 32a** (End at compassionate to one another)
1. To stop doing those things... choose to replace them with something better.
 2. **Be Kind**- Purposely doing good to them
 - a. It's very difficult to hold onto hate/anger when you **choose** to serve someone.
 - b. Not being walked all over or taken advantage of b/c it's your choice. You're in charge.
 3. **Be Compassionate**- Choosing to look through their eyes
 - a. Choosing to give a benefit of a doubt.
 - b. Taking a minute and trying to walk in their shoes.
 - c. **Horrible people have usually been hurt horribly.**
 - d. Also means choosing to assume the best...
 - e. How many arguments, misunderstandings, hurts would be avoided if we simply... Assumed the best of each other?

4. If you choose Kindness and Compassion... you will find the secret that will make every single relationship better...

H. **V. 32b** (end at forgiving each other)

1. Forgiving- On going/continual
2. When you choose to purposely do good to someone who hurt you, assume the best, and try to see things through their eyes...
3. It leads you to forgiveness.
4. **Forgiveness**- Not sweeping it under the rug, or just getting over it, or trying to keep the peace.
5. Forgive and forget doesn't make sense... you don't forget.
6. It's acknowledging the wrong and the hurt they caused...
7. And continually choosing not to use it against them.
8. And not to letting their failure destroy the relationship
9. You're not letting them off the hook...
10. You are freeing yourself from the effects of their hurt.
11. You choose not to hold on to the anger/revenge/bitterness that wants to cling to you.
12. **Forgiveness creates healing and freedom**
13. You can't heal if you hang on to what is hurting you.

I. So far I've really said nothing about God or Jesus.

1. It would be difficult, but this is possible to do even if you never choose to follow Jesus.
2. It's just plain great life advice
3. If you're not a JF you can look at this as you would any advice... take it or leave it. You have no obligation or requirement to do any of this.
4. BUT- Paul takes this all one step further, one step deeper, he raises the bar
5. Christianity really is a great life philosophy, but truly following Jesus always means taking it further than that...

J. **V. 32c**

1. If you are a JF this is your goal, motivation, and secret cheat code.
2. You forgive just as God forgave you through Jesus.
3. How did God forgive through Jesus...?

4. Romans 5:8

5. **Sinners**- Broke the Law of Love... Rebelling
6. But **God was for us before we were ever for him.**
7. Jesus died for our penalty and offered forgiveness for past, present, and future sin... simply by trusting him.
8. Easy to speed by... God took a huge risk and offered forgiveness for sin that hadn't been committed yet.

9. God offers **preemptive forgiveness**
 10. "You're going to sin, you're going to break the Law of Love... I forgive you in advance."
 11. That penalty has already been paid for.
 12. Risk? Freedom to sin.
 13. No... life can be lived as a thank you and as an example of his love.
 14. You were preemptively forgiven... so, JF, choose to forgive before you even need to.
 15. **When you preemptively forgive you are displaying God's love for humanity.**
 16. "You are going to hurt me. I am choosing in advance to forgive you."
- K. But what if they don't deserve it? They don't.
1. Did you?
 2. Was Jesus' death only good enough for your sin?
 3. "But they need to make amends"... Maybe. But that's between them and God.
 4. And did you have to make amends before God forgave you?
 5. **God forgives b/c of relationship not amends.**

IV. YOU

- A. Forgiveness brings healing and freedom.
- B. What do we do?
- C. Start with compassion and kindness.
- D. **Find one way to see their point of view** (doesn't have to be reality, and it doesn't have to make sense)
- E. **Do one good thing for them** (really not for them. For your healing and if JF b/c God gave you good)... if not in contact might be choosing to speak well of, or choosing not to speak ill of.
- F. When you're ready... **Forgive... Choose not to define them by the hurt they caused.**
- G. **Going forward, choose preemptive forgiveness.**
 1. I will be hurt. I will be honest about my hurt.
 2. I will choose now that I will not use it against them
 3. And that it will not control me.
- H. "You have hurt me. I forgive you."
- I. "You will hurt me. I forgive you."

V. WE

- A. What if every couple had in their marriage vows, “You will hurt me. You are already forgiven.”
 - 1. And then daily chose to preemptively forgive.
- B. Family started day with... if you hurt me today I already forgive you.
- C. Jesus saw a relationship with you as so important... that though he knew there would be pain and suffering... he died to offer you preemptive forgiveness.
 - 1. He knows you will still cause hurt and pain but he chooses to forgive it b/c of his great love for you.
- D. Preemptive forgiveness is one of the great secrets to a happy life
- E. It can change every relationship you have.
- F. It will change your life.

G. The road to being better together is paved with preemptive forgiveness.

QUESTIONS

- 1. We all like the idea of forgiveness until it's our turn to offer it. What, “Yeah... but's” come to mind when you think of offering forgiveness to those who have hurt you?
- 2. What dangers do you foresee in offering “Preemptive Forgiveness?” What benefits?
- 3. Read 1 Peter 2:21-25. What stands out to you most when thinking about forgiving each other?
- 4. What is one step you can take in forgiving someone who has hurt you?
- 5. Who are you willing to offer preemptive forgiveness to this week?