



# Freedom!

## From Hurts, Hang-Ups, and Habits

\*Notes and quotes in this study are from “Life’s Healing Choices” by John Baker  
**Leader Notes**

### Session 5- Relationships

*“Blessed Are the Merciful...” -Matthew 5:7*

*“Blessed Are the Peacemakers...” -Matthew 5:9*

#### **I. Repairing Relationships**

Most of us are not only dragging around personal brokenness, but are also carrying relational baggage as well. Whether it was our brokenness, the brokenness of another, or both, the truth is that we have been hurt and have been hurtful to others. Although some may view relationships as superfluous, “niceties” in life, God views relationships as critical and core to our lives. Relational wholeness is God’s hope and purpose for our lives. The Ten Commandments and the Cross show us God’s guide and remedy for relational wholeness with God and others. Today, we are talking about repairing relationships, and our choice for today is:

**“Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me, and make amends for harm I’ve done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others.”**

## **II. Repairing Relationships By Forgiving Those Who’ve Hurt Us**

Have you ever taken a child to the ER? The last thing the child wants is for someone to touch the area that hurts, but in order for the doctor to heal them, the doctor sometimes has to make it hurt a little more to heal the wound. When we’ve been hurt by others, it’s hard to hear and listen to anything that “messes with” our wounds, and doesn’t seem to protect our wounds. However, it is important for us to be open to hearing and allowing God’s healing hand and “procedures” to free us. As painful as it might be, will you let God “mess” with your hurt?

*“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” –Matthew 5:7*

“When we are *merciful* to others, we are willing to forgive them, whether they deserve it or not. That’s what mercy is about- it’s undeserved.”

If we have been hurt by someone, and if someone has the nerve or courage to suggest that we should find a way to forgive the one who hurt us, the first thing many of us would say and feel is a question, “Why should I?!”

### **Why We Should Forgive Others**

#### **1) Resentment Doesn’t Work**

##### **Resentment is unreasonable.**

“The Bible says it plainly: *‘To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do.’ (Job5:2)*... Resentment hurts you much more than the person you resent. You’re the one who’s stewing, spewing, stressing, and fretting. You’re the one who’s losing sleep and being distracted from the joys of life. It’s not bothering them at all! They’re sleeping great!”

##### **Resentment is unhelpful.**

“Resentment cannot change the past, the problem, or the person who hurt you... Have you ever known anyone to say, “I feel so much better being resentful”? Of course not! Resentment just makes you mad and unhappy.”

##### **Resentment is unhealthy.**

“*‘Some people stay healthy till the day they die... Others have no happiness at all; they live and die with bitter hearts.’ (Job 21:23,25)* Resentment is like a cancer that eats you alive. It’s an emotional poison with physical consequences....

Resentment can lead to depression, stress, and fatigue. Nothing drains you emotionally like bitterness and resentment.”

**2) You’ll Need Forgiveness In the Future**

“We will all need God’s and others’ forgiveness in the future. *‘When you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive you your sins too.’* (Mark 11:25)... Resentment blocks you from feeling God’s forgiveness.”

“The Bible says you cannot receive what you are unwilling to give: *‘Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.’* (Matthew 6:12) It can be dangerous to pray the Lord’s Prayer. In it, you are praying, ‘Lord, forgive me as much as I forgive everybody else.’ Don’t burn the bridge you need to walk across.”

**3) God Has Forgiven You**

“If God has forgiven you, shouldn’t you forgive others? The Bible says, *‘You must make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.’* (Colossians 3:13)”

“You will never have to forgive anybody else more than God has forgiven you. When you have a hard time forgiving someone else, it’s usually because you don’t feel forgiven. It is a fact that people who feel forgiven find it easier to be forgiving.”

*“Remember, the Lord forgave you...” - Colossians 3:13*

*“Forgive each other, just as in Christ God has forgiven you.” -Ephesians 4:31-32*

How may understanding forgiving others as extending mercy to others help you in forgiving others? How may it hinder you? \_\_\_\_\_

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Which reason for forgiving others is most challenging for you? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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Which reason for forgiving others is most helpful for you? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **How We Forgive Others**

### **1) Reveal Your Hurt**

“You have some options when it comes to dealing with your hurts. You can *repress* them and pretend they don’t exist, but they do. You can *ignore* them... You can *suppress* them and say, ‘It’s no big deal; it doesn’t matter.’ Or you can do what works: You can *admit* them. You can reveal the truth that you hurt.”

“Why is it that we don’t want to admit that the people we love have caused us pain? Perhaps it’s because we have the misconception that you can’t love somebody and be angry with them at the same time... A woman in a counseling session insisted, ‘I forgive my parents; they did the best they could.’ But the more she talked, the more obvious it became that she really hadn’t forgiven them.”

“If you want to close the door on your past and get closure so certain people don’t hurt you anymore, you can do it. But there’s one thing you have to remember: there is no closure without disclosure... Once you’ve revealed the hurt, then you will be in a position to forgive.”

Take time to write down who hurt you, their relationship to you, what they said that hurt you, what they did that hurt you, how the hurt made you feel, and the effects that the wound had and/or has on your life today.

### **2) Release the Offender**

#### **When do I release the offender?**

“The answer is that you do it now; you don’t wait for the offender to ask for forgiveness. You make the choice to do it independently of the other person. You do it whether the person asks for forgiveness or not.”

Our freedom cannot depend on what others do. It is dependent on our choices and God’s grace that meets us in our choices.

#### **How often do I have to do it?**

“Peter: ‘How often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?’  
‘No!’ Jesus replied, ‘seventy times seven.’ –Matthew 18:21-22

“Forgiveness is not a one-shot deal where you say, ‘I forgive you,’ and it’s done. Those feelings of resentment are going to keep coming back. Every time they do,

you've got to forgive again until you have fully released the offender, even if it takes a hundred times or more."

**How will I know that I have fully released an offender?**

"You'll know when you can think about him or her and it doesn't hurt anymore. You'll know when you can pray for God's blessing on his or her life. When you can begin to look at and understand the hurt he or she feels, rather than focusing on how you have been hurt- remembering that hurt people hurt people."

**Is it always wise to release the offender face-to-face?**

"Not always. And in some cases it's not even possible to go back to the people who have hurt you. To bring up old hurts may not be productive for you or kind to them. If your parents hurt you, they may not even know about it, and for you to go back to them forty years later and bring up old pain would just blow them away."

"You may not be able to find some of the other people even if you wanted to. They may have remarried, moved away, or even died. What do you do in those situations? There are two techniques you can use. One is the empty chair technique... Another technique is to write a letter that you will never mail."

"Say, 'I need to say some things to you. Here's how you hurt me,' and you lay it out... At the end you say, 'But starting today, I forgive you because God has forgiven me, because resentment doesn't work, and because I will need forgiveness in the future.'"

**3) Replace Your Hurt With God's Peace**

"At some point, all this free forgiveness may start to sound unfair. 'If I forgive this person- especially if I forgive my offender without him asking for forgiveness or without me ever confronting her face-to-face- then he or she gets off scot-free. I've been hurt, and this person suffered no consequence.'"

"We need to let God settle the score... He's going to call things into account; He's going to balance the books; and one day, He's going to have the last word. He'll take care of it... He's just."

"The Bible tells us to '*let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.*' (Colossians 3:15) You get to choose what rules your heart. It can be the misery of unforgiveness or the peace of Christ."

This last section on "how" to forgive is challenging. Which statement or aspect of forgiving others is the most challenging or helpful for you? \_\_\_\_\_

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### III. Repairing Relationships By Making Amends

“Repairing relationships is a two-part process: we’ve talked about *forgiveness*; the second part is *making amends*. Not only have people hurt you; you have hurt other people.” This is a hard truth that we must swallow.

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” –Matthew 5:9*

“When we *work for peace*, we put out real effort to make amends.”

The truth is that most of us are not necessarily “peacemakers”, but “peace-lovers”. Even though we acknowledge the *importance* of working for peace and really *like* peace, we do not want to go through the difficult process of *making* peace.

#### Why We Need to Make Amends?

“Dealing with the root of your problems means dealing with unresolved relationships. Until you do this, recovery can’t happen. When I got to this choice, I had a lot of work to do. I had quite a long list of names of people to whom I needed to make my amends.”

“Over the years of making poor choices, I had hurt a lot of people. They ranged from former employees and employers, to friends and neighbors. But the most special amends I needed to make were to my family. I had caused them a lot of pain and heartache, but they graciously accepted my amends, and our relationships were restored. Today those relationships are stronger and more loving than I could ever have hoped for or deserved.”

*“If you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.” –Matthew 5:23-24*

In healing, restoring, and moving forward in freedom, it is important to not only repair our relationship with God, but with others as well. In fact, if we do not acknowledge and make amends for the ways we have hurt others, we will not only carry guilt and the effects of guilt in our lives (destroying our confidence, damaging our current relationships, and keeping us stuck in the past), but Matthew

5:23-24 seems to suggest that making amends with others is a part of the process of making amends with God Himself.

## **How We Make Amends**

*“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”*  
(Romans 12:18) ... Do what you can... You are responsible for what you do; you are not responsible for how the person you approach responds to your amends.”

### **1) Make a List**

Write down the names of those you've hurt and their relationship to you, what you said to hurt them, what you did to hurt them, how you think you made them feel, and why you are sorry for hurting them.

When we write these things down on paper and get it down in black and white, our offenses become more real. If you are having trouble thinking of people you've hurt, the following questions may help.

- Is there anyone to whom you owe a debt that you haven't repaid?
- Is there anyone you've broken a promise to?
- Is there anyone you are guilty of controlling or manipulating?
- Is there anyone you are hypercritical of?
- Have you been verbally, emotionally, or physically abusive to anyone?
- Is there anyone you have not appreciated or paid attention to?
- Is there anyone you have been unfaithful to?
- Have you ever lied to anyone?

### **2) Sitting Where They Sit**

“Most of us have heard these words from Jesus before: ‘Do to others as you would have them do to you.’ So stop and think, ‘If someone were going to come and apologize to me, how would I want it done?’

**Here are four aspects to consider.**

- ❖ **Timing-** “You don't just bring up a sensitive topic when they're rushing out the door or as they're laying their head down on the pillow: ‘By the way, I've got some stuff to deal with, and it involves you.’”
- ❖ **Attitude-** “Sincerely and simply say what you did wrong. Don't make any justification for your actions or attitude; offer no excuses. Just humbly acknowledge your part in the problem and assume whatever responsibility

belongs to you. The other person may have had a part in the problem too, but you're just trying to clear up *your* side of the ledger."

- ❖ **Appropriateness-** "There will be some situations when contacting the one you've hurt would be unwise. Remember, 'except when to do so would harm them or others.' If you were involved in an affair, it would be inappropriate to have further contact with that person. The more serious your offense, the less likely it would be appropriate to make amends face-to-face. So what do you do? Once again, you can use the empty-chair or unmailed letter technique."
- ❖ **Restitution-** "Make restitution wherever possible. If you've borrowed something and not returned it, return it. If you owe somebody some money, pay it back- even if it takes a long time. Making restitution gives you freedom and confidence."

### 3) **Refocus Your Life**

"Today can be a new day. Starting today, you can refocus your life on doing God's will in your relationships."

*"Put your heart right... Reach out to God, ... then face the world again, firm and courageous. Then all your troubles will fade from your memory, like floods that are past and remembered no more."* –Job 11:13,15-16

**Put your heart right-** "Refocusing your life begins with your heart. This is where you get your attitude right so you can begin to make amends." This is the source of desire and will that is the foundation of a life that seeks to live right.

**Reach out to God.** "If you haven't yet asked God into your life, you can do it today. You do not have the strength to make amends on your own. It's too big a job to handle alone. As you reach out to God, He will enable you to reach out to others and make amends."

**Face the World Again.** "As you make amends and clean your slate, 'as far as it depends on you,' you resume living. Your eyes are open and looking ahead as you courageously and joyfully face the world. You don't withdraw; you don't hide in a shell; you start looking ahead." *"Then all your troubles will fade from your memory like floods that are past and remembered no more."*

Which statement or aspect of making amends to others is the most challenging and/or helpful to you? \_\_\_\_\_

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## V. Application

### Write about it.

- How do you feel, overall, about the importance of relationships in your life?
- How do you feel or think about the reasons why we should forgive others?
- Write down who hurt you, their relationship to you, what they said that hurt you, what they did that hurt you, how the hurt made you feel, and the effects that the wound had and/or has on your life today.
- What are barriers that may keep you from forgiving others?
  
- What do you need to do to move from being a peace-lover to peace-maker?
- Why is it important to you to make amends with those that you have hurt?
- Write down the names of those you've hurt and their relationship to you, what you said to hurt them, what you did to hurt them, how you think you made them feel, and why you are sorry for hurting them.
- Use the questions under "Make a List" to help you see those you've hurt.
- What are barriers that may keep you from making amends with others?

### Share about it.

Share your reflections from "Write about it" with someone nonjudgmental, trustworthy, and willing to help you, and ask them to pray for you.

Share your forgiveness and making amends list with your supporter before sharing with the people that hurt you or the people that you've hurt. They may help you develop a safer plan that minimizes further hurt. Your supporter may be good to have present when you do the empty chair exercise or to hear your unmailed letter.

### Pray about it

*Dear God, You have shown me that holding on to resentment for the wrongs done to me and refusing to make right my own wrongs has crippled me- emotionally, spiritually, and even physically. I ask You today to help me be honest about the hurts I feel. I've stuffed some and ignored others, but now I am ready to come clean and tell the truth about my pain. As I do, I ask that You give me the strength and the courage so I can release those who have hurt me and let go of my resentment toward them. Only by Your power will I be able to do this, Lord.*

*I pray, also, that You will give me the courage and discernment to know how to make amends to those I have hurt. Help me to be honest as I look back and remember, and guide me as I find the ways to make restitution, where appropriate.*

*Finally, I pray that I can begin a new life today as I refocus my life on doing Your will in my relationships. Help me set aside my selfishness and set my whole heart on You and Your ways. I know I have a long way to go, but I'm so thankful for your presence and help every step of the way. Lead me on, Lord. I put my past and future in Your hands. Amen.*