

Introduction to Biblical Counseling

Forgiveness Part III: Live with the Memories

Key Words: Memories, Memorials

Memories are Permanent

Introduction: One of the hardest obstacles to forgiveness may be the feeling that “I am unable to forgive because I can’t forget...” // So why forgive if nothing changes.”

- A. It is one thing to forgive, it is another thing to learn to live with the memories. // of the hurts we received or caused.
- B. It is one thing to forgive and another to learn to live with the consequences. // of the hurt and damage sin has caused you or you have done yourself.
 - 1. True, the painful events may be in the past, but the consequences and loss from them can continue into the present and affect our quality of life.
- C. Often the counsel given to those who have been hurt is “to forgive and forget,” “Put it behind you and move on” (a form of denial), “Don’t let it bother you” (repress your emotions). “You shouldn’t feel that way.”

Why do you believe the “forgive and forget” counsel is given? What biblical reference is offered to support this? How effective do you believe this counsel is? Have you ever been told this and what was your response?

- D. One of the reasons the “forgive and forget” concept is preached, taught or counseled may be because the speaker or counselor does not know what to do with your memories.
 - 1. Often one is made to feel guilty (bad, shame) because he may not be able to block out of his mind the person and events he has had to forgive. “What’s wrong with me?”
 - a. “If you have really forgiven them you should be able to put it behind you and move on.”

2. One of the first things you can tell a person who is struggling with their memories is that you hope they never forget. // This may come as a shock to them but you have reasons for stating this.

What would you guess are some of the reasons for telling a person not to forget? Recall the life of Joseph (Gen. 37-50). What do you think Joseph's response would have been if he were told to forgive and forget (cf. Gen. 50:20)?

E. Understand that the practice of forgiveness has nothing to do with forgetting. // This is a big shock to most believers because of a lot of false teaching on this subject.

1. Remember, God designed our brains so that all memories are stored in your brain by electronic impulses and chemical transference.
 - a. Memory: Your mind can store 600 memories a second which works out to 1,419,120,000,000 (trillion) bits of information in 75 years. The mind stores all that is recorded, thus it is almost physically impossible to forget.
 - b. True, Memory can be blocked out through denial, suppression, repression, disassociating or splitting off in the mind, thus preventing one from dealing with what they did or what was done to them. The mind will do anything necessary to keep from feeling pain.
 - c. Intentional blocking of memories prevents one from using biblical tools to work through to healing and glorifying God (Matt 5:16).
 - d. Yet, the mind may block memories until the person is able to deal with them.
 - 1) A friend's wife had totally blocked out memories of being sexually abused as a child. Something triggered these memories later in life at which time she was able to deal with them biblically.
2. (Therefore) Memory is not a function of the spirit. It is a biological function of the brain.
3. It must be remembered that a Christian's brain functions the same physically as a non-Christian's brain.
 - a. This is a surprise to many theologians. They think something mystical happens to the physical memory function either at salvation or after some deeper life experience.
 - b. They fail to understand that only the spirit is born again (John 3:6). The brain must be renewed (changed) over the course of time through repeated exposure

to the word of God (Rom. 12:2) coupled with obedience (James 1:25; II Peter 1:5-7).

- 1) The Greek word “transformed” in Romans 12:2 is reflected in the English word “metamorphosis” (which describes the process of a caterpillar spinning a cocoon and a butterfly emerging). It is a total change from the inside out (2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Cor. 4:16). We need to be transformed in our mind, not our spirit.
- 2) Philippians 2:12,13 “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”
4. The Christian tool of forgiveness does not destroy the brain’s physical function of memory that God designed. // God, instead, gives us biblical tools to deal positively with memories.

God Can’t Forget

II. Realize that even the attributes of God prevent Him from forgetting. // Why is that important to know? Because, we think we should do what God does. True, but what does God do?

A. God cannot do anything contrary to His attributes (character).

1. Omnipotent - all powerful
2. Omnipresent - everywhere at all times (Prov. 15:3, “The eyes of the Lord *are* in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.”)

B. One of God’s attributes is His omniscience - all knowing.

1. How can an omniscient God forget?
 - a. One prominent preacher stated that God is able to do what we cannot do, that is to forget. How can an all knowing God forget? God does not act contrary to His attributes.
 2. Jesus is God with a glorified body in heaven living with the memories of the cross.
 - a. After He ascended into Heaven, did Jesus forget how or why He was killed?
 - b. Those in heaven are constantly praising the Lord Jesus for who He is and what He did on the cross.
 - 1) Rev. 5:12, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

- c. Jesus is referred to as the Lamb over 25 times in the book of Revelation.
- d. Jesus is not walking around heaven asking the saints why He is called a slain lamb. He forgave those who killed him while He was still on the cross (Luke 23:34). He still remembers who did it and why it was done, yet He chose to forgive them. Remember, choosing to forgive an offender does not block out memory of what he did.
- e. Our rewards will be based on what we did; whether good or bad.
 - 1) II Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."
 - 2) I Corinthians 3:12-15, "Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

How would you explain the apparent contradiction between God stating He will remember our sin no more and Jesus remembering His crucifixion and why He was crucified? Can an omniscient God forget? What have you been told about this?

C. Problem: (But) How do you explain the verses that seem to indicate God does forgive and forget? // In fact, they actually state He forgets.

PROBLEM VERSES

Jer. 31:34 "... for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Psalm 103:12 "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Micah 7:19 "He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities underfoot. Yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

Heb. 10:17 "And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

1. Understand God often uses human terms or experiences to explain spiritual realities. // We only know about God through physical comparisons or analogies.
 - a. Jesus compared the spiritual experience of the new birth to the workings of the wind.
 - 1) John 3:7-8, “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ (8) The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is every one who is born of the Spirit.”
 - b. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is full of physical illustrations to explain spiritual realities (Matt. 5, 6, 7).
 - c. King David used physical objects to explain his understanding of God.
 - 1) Psalm 18:2 “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” Note: six physical words to explain his picture of God Who is a Spirit.
 - 2) In order for David to understand God with his finite brain, he had to compare God to a “rock, fortress, refuge, shield, horn of salvation and stronghold.” In reality God is a spirit not a “rock.” His solid strength, however, can be compared to a rock.

What additional physical illustration does God use to explain Himself, His character and His works?

Technical Process of Forgiveness

III. Understand the technical process of forgiveness from God’s perspective.

A. Old Testament description of the process: King David

1. King David pictured the technical process of forgiveness in the Old Testament.
 - a. Psalm 32:2, “How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute (put on their bill) iniquity, \ and in whose spirit there is no deceit.”
 - 1) When God forgives fully, He does not hold the sin bill against them anymore because it is paid. But it doesn’t mean it never existed.

B. New Testament description of the process of God’s perspective:

1. The Apostle Paul described the same technical concept of forgiveness in the New Testament.
 - a. 2 Cor. 5:19, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting (imputing) their trespasses against them...”
 - 1) Christians’ sins are no longer counted, imputed or reckoned against them anymore because Christ has taken them on Himself on the cross (II Cor. 5:4).

C. The words “imputing” and “counting” are financial accounting terms.

1. Literal meaning: “To reckon (add) to one’s account” or “to put on one’s account” as either paid or due.
 - a. Because all our sin was put on Christ, we are instantly justified; it is not a gradual process.
 - b. The sin bill was due because it was on our sin account. Then Christ died on the cross and paid the sin bill in full. So the bill was real and it was owed, but Christ paid the sin bill that was due and now the account reads, “Paid in Full!” It does not say, “It was never owed.”
 - 1) Jesus’ closing words on the cross were, “It is finished” (Greek, *tetelestai*) (John 19:30). In ancient papyri tax receipts this word was written across them, meaning “paid in full.” Jesus was declaring for the world that His redemptive work was completed. He had been made sin for people (II Cor. 5:21) and had suffered the due penalty of God’s justice which our sin deserved.
 - c. The results of forgiveness are like a bookkeeping function in God’s mind; the bill is paid and it’s not due again, but it does not mean the bill never existed. That is the reason Stephen prayed while he was being stoned to death, “Lord do not charge them (to their account) with this sin” (Acts 7:60). “Do not charge” literally means, “Do not put their sin on their account as a bill that is owed because it is now paid.”
 - 1) If you have a \$400 gas bill due and a friend pays it for you, how much do you owe? NONE. The fact it was paid by someone else does not mean it was never due. Now that it is paid, no one is able to come back to you and ask for payment. But you have receipt that it was paid.

Sin Rom. 3:23	Forgive II Cor. 5:21	No Condemnation Rom. 8:1
DUE	PAID	BALANCE DUE
\$400	\$400	0

- a) Rom. 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- b) 2 Cor. 5:21, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

God’s Memory of Your Sin

IV. The Old Testament prophet, Ezekiel, best illustrates exactly what God actually chooses to do with His memory of your forgiven sin. // This is the same choice you have to make after you forgive or are forgiven.

A. Ezekiel 18:22 (Referring to a wicked man who turns from his sin) “None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him...”

B. Ezekiel 33:16 “None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him.

1. The sin is not forgotten, but God chooses not to bring it up again against you as due (owed) ever again. This is also a very important relational tool. When you forgive someone you are not able to bring it up against them again; however, forgiveness and trust are two separate issues.
 - a. Forgiveness is to be granted; trust may need to be earned.
2. God chose to pay the sin bill in full through the death of His Son. In His mind it is not as if you never sinned. He still remembers the sin as an omniscient God. But He also remembers His Son paid your sin bill in full and therefore, it will not be brought up to you or against you for payment.
3. That is the reason God expects you to forgive others just like you were forgiven (Matt. 18:21-35; Luke 11:4).
4. It is not that you forget the offender’s offense. It is that you choose not to hold it up to him as if it was not forgiven. The difference between forgiveness and trust will be addressed later.
 - a. Thomas Adams, a Puritan (1600-1700) said, “Sins that are forgiven are now as if they had never been committed.” This is a popular belief but it is not biblical.

What takes a greater demonstration of grace: to forgive and forget or to forgive and remember and choose not to remember it against the offender? Why would that be the case?

Practical Solutions

V. What do you then do with your memories if you have been hurt?

A. Treat memories of forgiven sin like old bills that are stamped “paid.”

1. The receipts (memories) are reminders of bills that were due but are now paid, either by giving forgiveness (stamp their bill paid) or by receiving forgiveness (stamp your bill paid).
2. Memories are designed to remind you of the Biblical tools you used for your healing and freedom and for His glory. // It's your choice.

B. Use past memories of forgiven offenses as present reminders of God's grace and mercy whether you are granting or receiving forgiveness or revenge.

1. The Apostle Paul remembered the great hurt Alexander the coppersmith caused him.
 - a. 2 Tim. 4:14a, “Alexander, the coppersmith, did me much harm...” (Acts 19:33-34).
2. Then Paul remembered and reported to Timothy what he did with Alexander's sin.
 - a. 2 Tim 4:14b, “...the Lord will repay (revenge) him according to his deeds” (i.e. God's revenge).
 - 1) Paul transferred (sent) Alexander over to God (remember, forgive means to send away) and he left God with the responsibility to do to him what He saw fit. Paul did not believe revenge was wrong but he knew Who was responsible to take the revenge (Romans 12:19).
 - 2) Paul combined the two things together; the memory of the event and what he did with it.
 - a) ill.: Just like a cowboy who has two guns. The gun in the left holster represents the memory of the sin that was done to him. The gun in the right holster represents the memory of what he did with the sin (forgave it). In reality, the barrels of the two guns should be taped together so that when the gun representing the sin is pulled out, the other gun representing forgiveness is pulled out, too.
3. Apply the same sin-forgiveness procedure whether the sin was done to you (grant forgiveness) or by you (receive forgiveness). // It works both ways.
4. Most of the pain from a hurt received or a sin done continues to hurt because of a failure to recall what was done (sent away to Jesus) with those hurts.
5. You must come to the point of accepting the losses and choose to grow through them.

C. Stop re-confessing your past sin that has already been forgiven.

1. Re-confession only increases doubt in your heart that you received forgiveness which then results in more false guilt for past forgiven sin.
 - a. Condemnation comes from Satan, others and self (Rev. 12:10) but not from God.
 - b. Conviction comes from the Holy Spirit (John 16:8) through people (Gal 6:1) or Scripture (Psalm 119:9).
2. Your memories of past forgiven sin are not designed by God to promote re-confession.
 - a. If you confessed a sin a thousand times, that is 999 too many times.
 - b. The Scripture does not say, "If we re-confess our sins He is faithful to forgive our sins..."
3. Re-confession of past forgiven sin only reinforces a lie that the sin was not forgiven in the first place and can result in increased depression and false guilt.
 - a. You cannot neutralize false guilt by reconfession.
4. If you sinned against a person, confess in once. If they refuse to forgive you then say, "I look forward to the day when you can find it in your heart to forgive me." If they remind you of your offense you can restate, "I was wrong for what I did and I hope someday you can forgive me."
 - a. If others remind you, tell them, "Thank you for letting me know how deeply I hurt you."

D. Distinguish between true guilt and false guilt. // They feel the same.

1. True guilt means that we are worthy of blame (the sin bill is due) and it should result in repentance, confession and forgiveness.
 - a. But if we confess our sin (I John 1:9) He is faithful and is just and will forgive us our sin (and to emphasize the forgiveness) and He cleanses us from all unrighteousness.
 - b. David experienced true guilt after he numbered the people.
 - 1) II Samuel 24:10, "And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the Lord, 'I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now I pray, O Lord, take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly.'"

2. If we feel guilty after confessing our sin to God, we are now experiencing false guilt, which is a feeling that we are still worthy of blame. // Our feelings are not submitting to the truth and reality of forgiveness.
 - a. False guilt means we still take moral responsibility for actions, events and situations that either we did not do, or we did these things but they have been repented of, confessed and forgiven (Rom 8:1).
3. All feelings of guilt must be tested by truth from Scripture and reality. // Use the same truth test used with lie based false prophets.
 - a. I John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits (with truth or reality) to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets (and false emotions) have gone out into the world (or turned loose in your mind).
4. Because your emotions are not subject to truth, they need to be tested with truth, reality, and historical fact on a regular basis.
 - a. Because Satan constantly accuses us before God regarding our sin (Rev. 12:10), he will also accuse you in your mind and it will sound like it's your voice, not his.
5. Belief in the lie that your sin was not forgiven can destroy your quality of life and lead to depression more than the actual sin.
 - a. It can lead to addictions to cover the emotions of guilt and shame.
 - b. All addictions are shame based.
6. Re-confession based on false guilt will lead you to feel you need to forgive yourself.
 - a. People who teach or practice "self forgiveness" do so because they still feel blame after confessing their sin to God. That is false blame. Guilt means you are worthy of blame. After the sin has been confessed, it is forgiven and you are cleansed from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). You do not rid yourself of false blame by forgiving yourself. You get rid of it by acknowledging the truth that you are forgiven, then renounce the lie that you are still worthy of blame. The false doctrine of self forgiveness does not deal with the embedded lie that is feeding the false guilt.
 - 1) Self forgiveness prayer, "If I confess my sins to myself, I am faithful and just to forgive me of my sin and cleanse me from all unrighteousness" that God failed to do.
 - b. Some writers' logic is that if God has forgiven you do not "pick it up" again. So far, so good. But then they state the reason one should not pick it up is that when God forgives He forgets and puts it behind His back. Then they state, "Through the inscrutable mystery, divine omniscience has somehow forgotten

your sin.” Then they state, “You can forgive yourself.” (Seaman’s, p. 22) The one small problem they have is that God cannot act contrary to His attributes. He cannot forget and be all knowing.

7. Do not confuse sadness over sin with blame or guilt. Sadness over sin is a normal emotion that is part of life. Regret is normal. But both sadness and regret can motivate one to humility and that attitude is very pleasing to God (James 4:6).
8. Choose to live out of your “thinker” (based on truth) and not your “feeler” (based on emotions) which may not be based on truth.

How have you dealt with true guilt and false guilt? What was the result?

E. Distinguish between a glance or a gaze in the rearview mirror of the past.

1. A glance at the past is as appropriate as glancing from time to time in the rearview mirror of your car.
2. Your gaze or focus should be on the present and future just as you look out the windshield of your car to see where you are going. // If you drive forward looking through the rearview mirror or just your side mirrors, you will ultimately crash.

What would a glance or a gaze look like as it relates to past forgiven sin? How would a person’s life be different if it was reversed?

F. Seek to make your present relationships a trophy (example) of one who has experienced grace and mercy based on giving or receiving forgiveness. \ \ Build a display case in your mind of your forgiven sin. The Apostle Paul did this.

1. Paul used the past memory of his sin as a trophy (example) to the church of God’s perfect patience and mercy.
 - a. I Tim. 1:12-16 “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service; (13) even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; (14) and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. (15) It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. (16) And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost,

Jesus Christ might demonstrate his perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”

- 1) Note: v. 13 He remembered the depth of his sin – “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent aggressor (violently arrogant).
- 2) He still believed in his mind he was the worst sinner that ever lived (v. 15 “to save sinners, of whom I am chief”).
 - a) “I am” (present active indicative) being the chief of sinners right now. He was not doing those things now but the fact remains that he did them. Paul believed that no one had ever sinned any worse than he did – he was the worst of the lot.
- 3) Why did God choose Paul? “That in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering (perfect patience) as a pattern (trophy) to those who are going to believe on Him...” vs. 16.
- 4) If the worst of the worst can be saved and forgiven, anyone can.

Would you agree with Paul’s assessment of being the worst human being on earth? Who would you say was worse than Paul? Why do you believe he felt that way even knowing the huge atrocities many of the Old Testament kings committed? (CF 2 Kings3:21)

2. Paul’s past memory of his sin gave him a huge appreciation for grace, not guilt. Grace is free to remember what guilt tries to forget.
 - a. I Cor. 15:9-10 “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit (qualified) to be called an apostle. (Why?) Because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, // and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”
 - b. His past was simply a backdrop (frame) on which to display his life as a trophy of God’s grace in his life.
3. Paul’s past memories greatly motivated him to maintain a humble attitude.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15:9, “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”
4. The only thing Paul put in his past, not to be brought up to brag about, was his self righteous accomplishments in Judaism.

- a. Phil. 3:13 “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.”
 - b. Dr. Robert Lightner, associate professor of Systematic Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary, “Paul refused to be controlled or absorbed by his past heritage (not sin) (vv. 5-7) or his attainments (v. 8). (BKC, NT. P. 661)
 - 1) This verse is often misused and quoted totally out of context and in ignorance of the rest of Paul’s testimony in his other letters. Paul did not forget his past sin. He chose not to focus on his past accomplishments (Phil. 3:4-8).
 - c. Paul recalled his past sins and used the memories of them in appropriate ways in his letters (I Tim 1:13). He did not mention those memories in every letter.
5. Joseph never forgot the evil done to him by his brothers but he assigned a positive purpose to his brothers’ past offense.
- a. Gen. 50:20, “But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.”
 - b. Sadly, his brothers never processed their sin and it was always in the back of their minds.
 - 1) Gen. 42:21, “Then they said to one another, “*We are* truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.”

G. Use your past memories of forgiven sin as a basis for your present expressions of love for God. // This is in contrast to feelings of guilt, shame or fear.

- 1. Jesus illustrated this principle with a forgiven prostitute.
 - a. Jesus explained to Simon, the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50) the process of using memories of forgiven sin as motivation for love. // At Simon’s dinner party, he failed to fulfill the normal custom of having a servant wash his guests’ feet. A harlot came and washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and wiped His feet with her hair. Simon was shocked. He knew for her to touch Him disqualified Jesus to go into the temple. Then Jesus spoke to Simon while looking at the woman.
 - b. Luke 7:47, “For this reason I say to you (Simon), her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much, but he who is forgiven little, loves little” or has forgotten what he has been forgiven.
 - 1) “Have been forgiven” perfect tense verb. It happened sometime in the past but the results of the forgiveness continue into the present.
 - 2) “For she loved much” Dr. John Martin states, “...The woman was not forgiven because of her love; rather, she loved because she was forgiven.” (p. 229, B.K.C., N.T.)

- 3) Her love for Jesus was as deep as her memory of her forgiven sin.
 - 4) Jesus had forgiven this woman but did not forget her sin. Jesus was (is) God!
2. Paul illustrated how he used memories of his forgiven sin to prompt his present love for the Lord and dedication to serve Him.
 - a. II Cor. 5:14, “For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died.
 3. Use your memories of forgiven sin as a motivation to love and to serve others now. Key: Loving and serving are not from a motivation of repayment to God but out of appreciation for receiving His forgiveness.
 - a. You could not live long enough and do enough good to repay God or anyone else for your past sin nor could others live long enough to repay you for their past sin against you.

H. Here are three things you can pray when memories of your past forgiven sins come to mind.

Steps to Love

1. Thank Him for the memory.
2. Thank Him for the forgiveness.
3. Love Him out of your gratefulness.

I. Here are four things you can do when memories of others’ sins against you come to your mind.

Memories of Offenses

1. Thank Him for the memory.
2. Thank Him for dying for their sin.
3. Thank Him for the grace to forgive.
4. Thank Him for using it in your life.

J. Accept the reality you may never forget others’ past sin.

1. The Apostle Paul did not forget others’ past sin.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

2. But notice what he did with those memories. He also recalled the process God took them through; washed, sanctified and justified (vs.11).

K. Distinguish between granting forgiveness and earning trust.

1. We forgive offenders because of what Christ has done on the cross. The offender has to earn trust because of what he has done on earth.
2. Forgiveness you grant immediately as a gift to the offender.
 - a. Eph. 4:26, "Be angry, and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath."
 - b. When an offender confesses his sin to God, that handles the "legal" part of forgiveness.
 - c. When an offender confesses his sin to those he offended, that handles the relational part of forgiveness.
3. Trust is what the offender earns over time as a partial effort to heal an offended one who is living with the memories of his forgiven sin.
 - a. Rebuilding trust focuses on the relational part as a result of the offense.
 - b. Rebuilding trust is hard to do and takes time.
 - 1) Prov. 18:19, "A brother offended is harder to be won (back) than (to scale) a strong city."
 - c. Forgiveness implies you grant the offender an opportunity to rebuild trust.
4. Trust is built on repentance which includes a changed heart (thinking) with confirming actions of the inward change.
 - a. King David had to learn the need to change his heart after his adultery.
 - 1) Ps. 51:16, 17, "For You do not delight in sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart - These, O God, You will not despise."
 - b. David was willing to jump through hoops of performance but he saw clearly that God wanted a change of heart, not just a changed performance.

L. Trust that is demanded by a former offender will only result in delayed rebuilding of trust. Those who demand trust have rarely earned it and may be frightened by the emotional separation they have caused by their offense.

M. Distinguish between granting or receiving forgiveness and restoring relationships.

1. Understand that forgiveness is not the automatic restoration of relationships.
 - a. Forgiveness is a part of the process but is not the whole process.
 - b. Rekindling trust and learning to trust are the hardest parts of rebuilding relationships because of memories and losses of past hurts.
 - 1) Jesus forgave those who were killing Him, but it did not establish a relationship with them as Jesus did with one of the thieves on the cross.
 - a) Luke 23:34, "But Jesus was saying (to the executing soldiers), 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots dividing up His garments among themselves."
 - b) Luke 23:43, "And He said to him (the thief on the cross), 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.'"
 - 2) Forgiveness is unconditional but relationships are conditional.
 - a) God loves everyone unconditionally but He has established conditions for a relationship (Jn. 3:16; I Jn. 1:5-10).
 - b) Matt. 5:44, " But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

N. Accept the responsibility to either go to one who has offended you or the one you have offended and seek to be reconciled. // The reconciliation will include forgiveness, but it may also include restitution and rebuilding trust.

1. This is the strategy if your brother offends you.
 - a. Matt. 18:15-17, "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. (16) But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. (17) If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."
2. This is the strategy if you offended your brother.
 - a. Matt. 5:23-24, "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, (24) leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."
 - b. If you have confessed your sin to God you have been forgiven (I Jn. 1:9), that is the judicial part of the offence. When you go to an offended brother and

acknowledge your sin; that is the restoration of the relationship part of the offense.

- c. If you confess your sin to God you are forgiven by Him. Even if others will not forgive you, you are still forgiven by God.
- O. Choose to accept the reality to live with the consequences of others' sin against you. You will live with them whether you forgive or not. Your only choice is to live free through forgiveness or stay enslaved in the bondage of bitterness. Like Jesus, you must take the offenses of others upon yourself and use them for your benefit and for God's glory.**
- 1. Isaiah 53:5, " But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He* was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."
 - 2. Gen 50:20

Keys for success

- 1. Realize forgiveness and memories are two separate things.
- 2. Remember God does not forgive and forget.
- 3. Choose not to bring up a forgiven sin against an offender.
- 4. Treat memories of forgiven sin like canceled checks.
- 5. Be grateful your sin debt is paid in full.
- 6. Test guilt feelings with truth.
- 7. Use memories as reminders of God's grace and mercy.
- 8. Glance; don't gaze in the past.
- 9. Be a trophy of mercy and grace.
- 10. Let memories keep you humble.
- 11. Use your memories as a motivation to love God in the present.
- 12. Accept the fact you'll never forget.
- 13. Grant forgiveness, earn trust.

14. Take the initiative to give or to receive forgiveness.

Bibliography

Lynch, Charles M. *I Should Forgive, But...Finding Release from the Bondage of Anger and Bitterness*, Nashville, Tennessee: Word Publishing, 1998.

Walvoord, John and Ray Zuck editors. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old and New Testament*. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985.

Props

1. Duct tape / String
2. Mirror
3. Trophy
4. Red heart
5. Red light
6. Blank paper
7. Parrot
8. Ball
9. Hammer
10. Frame
11. Two sets of colored glasses either in different shapes or different color of lenses.
12. Switch

BUILDING MEMORIALS FROM MEMORIES

Small Group Questions

1. What experience have you had with being told to forgive and forget? How has it worked for you or anyone else you know?
2. How have you distinguished between true guilt and false guilt and what difference did it make in your life?
3. What are some of the lies Satan has attempted to instill in you regarding your past? How have you dealt with them? What was the result?
4. How would your life be different if you developed the discipline of recalling both your sin and what you did with it (i.e. forgiven)?
5. What is your life a trophy of today as a result of receiving past forgiveness? How could you use this to help another brother?
6. What patterns have you used to forget things either done to you or that you have done yourself? How successful were they? As a result, what would you recommend your brother do or not do from what you learned?
7. What experiences have you had in rebuilding trust? What did you do? How effective was it?
8. Describe a time when you did everything you could do to restore a fractured relationship and it didn't happen. What did God teach you through that experience?
9. What one thing you are going to do differently now? How can your group encourage you to follow through?