

SESSION 3

BIBLICAL FORGIVENESS

Exploring what it actually costs to forgive and why it's worth it

Reading

- Chapter 4: Forgiveness as an Embodied Gift Lived Out in Reality

Watch the Video



Opening Question

Is there someone in your life you have said you forgave, but still feel hurt or resentment toward? What makes forgiveness feel incomplete?

Key Idea

Forgiveness is not simply a feeling but a decision and a practice. Jesus describes wrongdoing as a debt, and to forgive is to absorb the cost rather than passing it on. This does not mean pretending harm did not happen, but choosing not to be defined by it. Often, forgiveness begins as a decision before it becomes a feeling, and it may need to be revisited over time. It is also something that is lived out in real, tangible ways, not just held internally.

At the same time, forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation, which requires trust and mutual participation. Forgiveness allows us to release our claim to revenge, while still taking harm seriously.

Reflection & Discussion

- Have you ever tried to forgive someone but found your feelings didn't change? What was that experience like?
- What helps you understand forgiveness as a decision rather than an emotion?
- What do you think it means to “absorb the cost” of what someone has done?
- How is forgiveness different from reconciliation in your experience?

Going Deeper (optional)

Identify what you feel is “owed” to you (an apology, justice, acknowledgment). Then ask yourself: Do I want to keep holding this debt, or am I willing to release it? Reflect on what each choice would mean for you.

Separate forgiveness and reconciliation in your mind. Decide what forgiveness might look like internally, and independently decide what level of relationship (if any) you want going forward.

Prayer

Lord, forgiveness is harder than we thought. Help us to choose it even when we don't feel it. Help us to act it even when our hearts are cold. Give us the will to release what we are tempted to hold on to, and the trust to believe that justice is yours. We ask for your grace - not because the wrong was small, but because your grace is greater. Amen.