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DEVELOPING A FORGIVENESS SEMINAR FOR MEMBERS
AT OPEN DOOR COMMUNITY CHURCH,
SHINGLETOWN, CALIFORNIA

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APPROVAL SHEET

DEVELOPING A FORGIVENESS SEMINAR FOR MEMBERS
AT OPEN DOOR COMMUNITY CHURCH,
SHINGLETOWN, CALIFORNIA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	vi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Context	1
Rationale	4
Purpose	6
Goals	6
Research Methodology	6
Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations	9
Conclusion	10
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR CULTIVATING BOTH AN ATTITUDE OF FORGIVENESS AND AN OPENNESS TO FORGIVE OTHERS	12
Motivations for Forgiveness	12
Attitudinal Forgiveness: Christ-Centered Attitude of Worship	17
Transactional Forgiveness: Christ-Centered Attitude of Reconciliation	21
An Attitude of Faith in God’s Provision: Christ- Centered Attitude of Faith in God’s Provision	24
Conclusion	30
3. HINDRANCES TO ATTITUDINAL FORGIVENESS	31
Forgiving God	32
Forgetting the Sins of Others	43

Chapter	Page
Forgiving Self	52
Summary	59
4. DEVELOPING AND LEADING A FORGIVENESS SEMINAR	61
Introduction	61
Identifying Eight Key Topics (Week 1)	61
Curriculum Development (Weeks 2-5)	64
Professional Review of Curriculum (Weeks 6 and 7)	65
Curriculum Evaluation Rubrics Reviewed, Curriculum Changes, and Pre-Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Assessments Collected (Weeks 8-10)	66
Final Arrangements (Weeks 11 and 12)	67
Forgiveness Seminar (Week 13)	69
Processing Data (Weeks 14 and 15)	80
Conclusion	81
5. FINAL EVALUATION AND REFLECTION ON THE FORGIVENESS SEMINAR	82
Introduction	82
Evaluation of the Project's Purpose and Goals	83
Strengths of the Project	87
Weaknesses of the Project	90
What I Would Do Differently	92
Theological Reflections	94
Personal Reflections	99
Conclusion	101
 Appendix	
1. PRE-BIBLICAL FORGIVENESS SEMINAR ASSESSMENT	104
2. CURRICULUM EVALUATION AGREEMENT	107
3. POST-FORGIVENESS SEMINAR ASSESSMENT	117

Appendix	Page
4. T-TEST	119
5. FORGIVENESS SEMINAR LEADER'S MANUAL	121
BIBLIOGRAPHY	189

PREFACE

The opportunity to develop and implement this project marks the culmination of my goal to take on the role as Department Head of Biblical Counseling at Shasta Bible College and Graduate School. In addition to meeting the education requirements for Department Head, I also fulfilled my goal of clarifying my own understanding of the teaching of Christ as it relates to attitudinal forgiveness. Furthermore, both the saints at Open Door Community Church and Shasta Bible College and Graduate School have more thoroughly understood attitudinal forgiveness both theologically and practically.

I would like to thank my professors at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary who, through their teaching, counseling, and encouragement, helped me gain direction for my life within ministry. Most specifically, I would like to thank my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Stuart Scott, who was the main reason I came to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Scott's wisdom and insight were invaluable to me.

I would like to thank three individuals that God providentially placed in my life to introduce me to biblical counseling. Dr. Jeff Forrey introduced me to biblical counseling during my third year of seminary. He demonstrated how to practically build upon my theological education. He taught me that counseling is theological. Wayne Johnston is another individual that the Lord brought into my life. Wayne mentored me through every phase of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors certification. Wayne taught me how to apply the Scriptures to my own life and also modeled what a biblical counseling training and discipleship ministry can look like in a local church. The third pillar that God placed into my life was Dr. Nicholas Ellen. Dr. Ellen provided the wisdom necessary to walk in my calling as a pastor, professor, husband, and father.

I would like to thank my church family at Open Door Community Church for their continued prayers and financial support and encouragement. Thank you for providing the opportunity to minister the Word of God both publicly and individually.

I would like to thank my father-in-law, Dr. Matt Kerr, who is also my pastor. Dr. Kerr has single-handedly influenced my understanding of the Bible and has also demonstrated what it means to “rejoice with those rejoice and weep with those who weep” (Rom 12:15). He has also shown me what it means to truly love God’s flock (John 21:17) and how to rightly handle the Scriptures (2 Tim 2:15).

To my incredible wife, Erin, who has stood by me through nearly nineteen years of theological education. She models what Paul emphasized in Philippians: “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (2:4). My wife is the humblest servant I know and outside of eternal life in Christ, she is my greatest gift from the Lord.

To our four precious kids: Kaitlyn, Elijah, Colin, and Makayla. May you grow up pursuing Christ with all your heart, mind, and soul. I pray that you will understand Paul’s words: “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

In closing, I want to thank the One who makes all things possible! I thank my Triune God through Jesus my Lord! I pray that You will continue enable me to struggle with all your energy that you so powerfully work in me (Col 1:29).

Matt Silva

Redding, California

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The mission statement of Open Door Community Church indicates that the church exists as a worshipping community to glorify God, a nurturing community for the growth of the believer, and a redeeming community with good news for the world. Glorifying God is the umbrella that covers both the nurture of the believer and the redemption of the lost. The nurturing community is made up of redeemed sinners still struggling with remaining sin. Some of the bad fruit manifested in the life of a believer may be idolatry, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, and divisions (Gal 5:19-20). It is an arduous task to glorify God in the midst of fellow redeemed sinners seeking their own glory and kingdom. Yet, the church must be committed to loving one another because this is how the world will know that believers belong to Jesus (John 13:35). Consequently, there is a direct correlation between the nurturing community and the world that has not received the good news. The pursuit to make disciples will be hindered if Christians are not walking according to the Spirit in their relationships to one another. For this reason, Open Door Community Church seeks to train believers to glorify God in their knowledge of and attitude toward maintaining unity by practicing biblical forgiveness among the nurturing community.

Context

Open Door Community Church (ODCC) in Shingletown, California, began as a small group of believers meeting once a week in a home for a Bible study. It was during this time of approximately six months of meeting together that the small group grew in number and believed it was God's will to plant a new church in the community. In 1970,

there were two churches in Shingletown: one Pentecostal and the other Baptist. Since the Baptist church was experiencing a decline in membership and because the church was currently without a pastor, the small group and the Baptist church, agreed to merge. The small group and Baptist church changed their name to Open Door Community Church, which became an independent non-denominational church. The first pastor was hired in 1971.

There have been three senior pastors at ODCC. Presently, I am the associate pastor, and my role includes leading the Biblical Counseling and Discipleship Ministry (BCDM). This ministry began in 2014. Before this time, the pastoral staff sent counseling cases to Christian psychologists. The BCDM is a ministry of ODCC and operates under the supervision and guidance of the elders and senior pastor. The ministry team consists of one full-time senior pastor, one part-time associate pastor, and one lay counselor.

The interpersonal context of ODCC demands a deeply rooted understanding of forgiveness. ODCC is located in a small community with nearly 2,283 residents.¹ Because the community is relatively small and close-knit, interpersonal relationships between church members are vital to the health of the congregation and the community. People within the community might abandon ODCC for various reasons. Some may have left because they have been sinned against or because they have sinned and are unwilling to repent. Those who vacate the church have the potential to do the most damage to gospel outreach in the community. People who leave the church rarely leave the town, nor do they break ties with their friends who remain at ODCC. Sins such as gossip, slander, and bitterness can be the bad fruit of unreconciled relationships.

Unfortunately, ODCC has suffered from the consequences of people leaving the church. The most visible outcomes occur when entire families leave. People may

¹ United States Census Bureau, “Community Facts: Shingletown CDP, California,” accessed March 11, 2018, https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk.

leave because of their unwillingness to work through interpersonal problems. In addition to the loss of members, the church's witness to the community has been damaged. Furthermore, some members remain in the church and remain unreconciled to one another. Often, these members are unwilling to reconcile with each other. Yet, unreconciled relationships are serious enough for Jesus to diagnose as committing murder in the heart (Matt 5:21-22). In Philippians 4:2-3, the apostle Paul exhorted two church members and summoned a peacemaker to help reconcile the relationship between these two women.

There seems to be a disconnect between what people know and how biblical forgiveness is practiced in everyday life. The crucible of suffering oftentimes unveils what one truly believes about God. This is certainly true of those struggling with interpersonal problems. I have counseled many individuals who refuse to forgive others. There may be several reasons associated with unforgiveness. Sometimes a person may be ignorant of what the Word teaches. Many Christians fail to distinguish between attitudinal forgiveness and transactional forgiveness.² At other times, unwillingness appears because of rebellion against God's commands. Additionally, most Christians appear to misunderstand the three-fold commitment involved with forgiveness: (1) choose not to dwell on the offender's sin, (2) no longer hold a grudge against the offender, and (3) do not talk about the offender's offense to others.³

In addition to church member misunderstandings, counselors in the BCDM often approach forgiveness differently. Each counselor serving in the BCDM currently has their own methodology concerning how to counsel someone dealing with forgiveness. Since the issue of forgiveness frequently surfaces in the counseling room, it would be beneficial for those doing formal counseling to follow the same method and principles.

² Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 131-32.

³ Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 132-33.

Rationale

To address the issues and tasks in the ministry context at ODCC, while also communicating the importance of reconciled relationships within the church setting, the BCDM and ODCC elders both recognized the need to conduct training in the area of biblical forgiveness. Therefore, the BCDM began this process by providing a biblical forgiveness seminar for ODCC members. A standardized curriculum was developed during the process of preparing for the seminar and was made available to the BCDM team for one-on-one discipleship. The forgiveness curriculum was also utilized for Sunday school classes and small groups. The content of the curriculum prepared ODCC members to handle both long-standing and short-term interpersonal problems between one another. The material emphasized what God requires of the attitudes of both the sinner and sufferer before reconciliation can occur between both parties. The second half of the curriculum addressed common unbiblical ideas paralleling forgiveness issues that challenge the biblical worldview of ODCC members.

Unreconciled relationships tend to drain the life out of the local church. Disunity in the church results from unreconciled relationships. The apostle Paul admonished the church in Corinth for their lack of unity at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-18). The Lord Jesus Christ cannot be honored where intentional disunity abides. Rather than loving and serving one another, sometimes the local church bites and devours one another and the result is that they are "consumed by one another" (Gal 5:15).⁴ These are some of the consequences and bad fruit of unreconciled relationships.⁵ Although forgiveness issues will always be a problem whenever people are present, the church should provide avenues to cultivate a culture of peacemaking. Ongoing unreconciled relationships should not occur in Christ's church. Instead, Christians must learn to live among their brothers

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

⁵ Timothy Lane and Paul David Tripp, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2006), 117-29.

and sisters in Christ with a secure commitment to practice attitudinal forgiveness unconditionally in their vertical relationship toward God (Eph 4:32; Mark 11:25). They must also be willing to reconcile their relationship to the sinner by practicing forgiveness if that person repents (Matt 18:32; Luke 17:3).

Christians are commanded by Christ to forgive horizontally after the sinner asks for forgiveness. At the culmination of Jesus' teaching on the parable of the unforgiving servant, he teaches his disciples that they must forgive others from their heart (Matt 18:35). Matthew 18:32 reveals that God's extension of forgiveness was conditional upon their repentance: "because you pleaded with me." Jesus teaches his disciples the same principle in Luke 17:3: "If your brother sins, rebuke him and if he repents, forgive him." The conditional nature of reconciliation between two parties will necessitate repentance on behalf of the sinner.

The parable is an application of what Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount. In this passage Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. Matthew 6:11-12 demonstrates the vertical aspect of God's forgiveness toward us, as well as the horizontal aspect of forgiving others (vv. 14-15). Jesus prepared His disciples for future ministry and life in a community of saints dealing with remaining sin by grounding them in the gospel. The local church has the opportunity to either magnify the glory of Christ or diminish the gospel message in the way that they practice forgiveness.

ODCC desires to be part of the mission of magnifying Christ's glory in the community. Christ's glory will not be manifested if biblical forgiveness is not practiced among those who have been forgiven much. Therefore, the BCDM provided a biblical forgiveness seminar. This seminar focused on the participant's understanding of biblical forgiveness as it relates to the issues of attitudinal and transactional forgiveness. The seminar involved teaching the participants about the motives and actions necessary to love the Lord and to look out for not only the interests of self, but also after the interest of

others (Matt 22:35; Phil 2:4). The curriculum also addressed the consequences involved when Christians fail to forgive one another.

The seminar benefitted ODCC in many ways. First, God's people learned to build their lives upon Christ's teaching. Second, their attitude toward forgiving one another changed. Third, the participants gained a better understanding of attitudinal and transactional forgiveness. Fourth, ODCC began to be known as a place where the people love God and one another. Lastly, it lightened the load of the BCDM ministry.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a biblical forgiveness seminar for members at Open Door Community Church in Shingletown, California.

Goals

The following three goals were necessary to guide this ministry project. These goals demonstrated the logical progression of a biblical solution to forgiveness issues at ODCC.

1. The first goal was to assess both the knowledge of and the attitude toward biblical forgiveness among the members of ODCC.
2. The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to train members at ODCC on biblical concepts of forgiveness.
3. The third goal was to teach the seminar and to modify both the knowledge and the attitude relating to the current forgiveness practices among the members of ODCC.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess both the knowledge of and the attitude toward biblical forgiveness among the members at ODCC. This goal was measured by administering a Forgiveness Seminar Assessment (FSA) to members of ODCC.⁶ The

⁶ See appendix 1 for the Basics of Forgiveness Assessment (FSA). All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

FSA was given prior to the first session of the seminar. The BCDM delivered a hard copy of the FSA to each participant that agreed to participate in the survey. The FSA provided a visible space for the participant to write the last four digits of their phone number.⁷ The BCDM gathered all the FSAs and carefully placed them in an envelope. The survey evaluated each member's knowledge of biblical forgiveness and their attitudes toward forgiving others. This goal was considered successful when 30 percent of those attending the seminar completed the PFSA and the material was analyzed yielding a clearer picture of the knowledge of forgiveness and attitudes toward forgiveness among ODCC members.

The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to train members at ODCC on biblical concepts of forgiveness. The curriculum covered theological foundations for attitudinal forgiveness: a theological model for attitudinal forgiveness, Christ-centered motivations, a Christ-centered attitude of worship, a Christ-centered attitude of reconciliation, and a Christ-centered attitude of faith in God's provision. The curriculum also covered hindrances to attitudinal forgiveness: forgiving God, forgetting the sins of others, and forgiving yourself. The curriculum was reviewed by an expert panel consisting of three people. Two of panel participants are professors at Shasta Bible College and Graduate School in Redding, California. The third participant is a local pastor in Weaverville, California. He is proficient with peacemaking principles. The expert panel utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁸ I delivered the curriculum for review after four sessions of content were completed.⁹ Once I made the necessary changes that the

⁷ The last four digits of the participant's phone number served as the personal identification number, and it served to keep the survey anonymous. After the assessment was returned to the church office, it was filed in a locked cabinet. The FSA assessed with the PFSA and the results of the seminar were measured by the utilization of a t-test.

⁸ See appendix 2 for the rubric.

⁹ The reviewers received the first half of the curriculum (the first four sessions). Once I made the necessary changes after their review and obtained their approval, I gave them the second half of the curriculum (the last four sessions).

reviewers requested, and obtained their approval on the first four sessions, I gave them the second half of the curriculum (the last four sessions). The goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the 90 percent benchmark was not initially met, then the material was revised until it met the standards.

The third goal was to teach the seminar and to reassess both the knowledge and the attitude relating to the current forgiveness practices among the members of ODCC. The seminar took place at ODCC on a Friday evening from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. and Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Each session consisted of approximately forty-five minutes designated for teaching. The last fifteen minutes of each session was for answering questions relating to each session topic. The sessions were taught in the main sanctuary and included PowerPoint presentations and a workbook so participants could follow along. Light snacks and beverages were provided on Friday evening and lunch was served on Saturday. The goal was measured by administering the PFSA after the last session of the seminar on Saturday¹⁰ and it was considered successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-curriculum results. Neil Salkind explains that a t-test for dependent samples “involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the difference between the scores.”¹¹ Since this project involved a single group of the same subjects being surveyed under two conditions, a t-test of dependent samples was the appropriate test statistic.¹² The BCDM distributed the hard copy of the PFSA to the same participants that took the FSA. They were asked to record the same personal identification number that was provided on the initial survey. The survey took approximately ten minutes to

¹⁰ See appendix 3 for the PFSA.

¹¹ Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 191.

¹² Salkind, *Statistics*, 189.

complete. After the PFSA was completed the BCDM collected the surveys and placed them in an envelope. The envelopes were correlated with the previous personal identification number codes and recorded to perform a t-test. The t-test disregarded the results of participants that did not attend all of the sessions. This goal was considered successfully met when the post-rubric score demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the FSA and PFSA scores.¹³

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms was used in the ministry project:

Attitudinal forgiveness. The unconditional and personal heart response to God whereby the offended commits the offender to God’s judgment, guards his own heart against walking in the flesh, and is willing to reconcile with the offender if he repents.¹⁴

Biblical counseling. A process whereby a Christian, utilizing the means of change God has provided (e.g., Scripture, the Holy Spirit, the church, and prayer), to minister to individuals—as simultaneously sinners, saints, and sufferers—such that they learn to walk according to Holy Spirit and live for Christ in the midst of life’s difficulties (Rom 6-8; Gal 5:16; Gal 2:20).¹⁵

Biblical forgiveness. Christ Brauns explains, “A commitment by the offended to pardon graciously the repentant from moral liability and to be reconciled to that person, although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated.”¹⁶

¹³ See appendix 4 for the t-test results.

¹⁴ Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 131-32.

¹⁵ The concept of sinners, saints, and sufferers was adapted from Michael R. Emler, *Crosstalk: Where Life and Scripture Meet* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2009), ii. Other helpful definitions are found in John Street, *Men Counseling Men: A Biblical Guide to the Major Issues Men Face* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 26-27; and Heath Lambert, *Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 11-34.

¹⁶ Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Answers for Complex Questions and Deep Wounds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 55.

Transactional forgiveness. A conditional response whereby the offended person commits to forgive the repentant offender by choosing not to dwell on the offender's sin, hold this sin against the offender, and gossip about the offender's sin to others.¹⁷

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the FSA and PFSA was dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their knowledge of and attitude toward forgiving others. To mitigate this limitation, the respondents were promised that their answers would remain anonymous by using the last four digits of their phone number as a personal identification number. Second, the effectiveness of the seminar was limited to the participants of both Friday evening and Saturday. If the participants did not attend all the seminar sessions, then it would be difficult to measure how beneficial the training had been. To mitigate this limitation, the weekend of the forgiveness seminar was scheduled around the best availability of the majority of the participants. Furthermore, those who did not attend at least seven sessions will be excluded from the survey.

Three delimitations were placed on this project. First, the participants must be members of ODCC because this implies that they are born again to the living hope. Second, the project primarily addressed the issue of attitudinal forgiveness. Although aspects of transactional forgiveness were included in the curriculum, the scope and depth of reconciled relationships was limited. The focus of this project was on attitudinal forgiveness because this is the work that must occur in the heart of a believer if transactional forgiveness is to take place. Third, this project was confined to eight hours of teaching a two-day seminar. The brevity of the seminar allowed for follow-up and personalized ministry for those desiring transactional forgiveness with their offender.

Conclusion

Redeemed sinners are justified by God so that they no longer live for themselves, but for Christ. God has supplied all the provisions necessary to glorify Him

¹⁷ Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 131-32.

within the nurturing community. The following chapters demonstrate how issues of attitudinal and transactional forgiveness can be applied to the life of a Christian. Chapter 2 will focus on key passages in the synoptic gospels concerning attitudes of forgiveness and how God calls Christians to aggressively love the sinner and to pursue forgiveness for God's glory. Chapter 3 will focus on replacing prevailing unbiblical ideas with what the Bible teaches about issues of forgiveness.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR
CULTIVATING BOTH AN ATTITUDE OF
FORGIVENESS AND AN OPENNESS
TO FORGIVE OTHERS

This chapter includes four passages from the synoptic gospels which teach that Christians must cultivate both an attitude of forgiveness and an openness to forgive others. The first two passages describe the kind of attitude needed in relation to the motivations and worship one expresses toward God. The next two passages corresponded to a Christian's attitude of both openness to forgive others and an attitude of faith in God's resources if reconciliation is not possible.

Motivations for Forgiveness

Matthew 6:14-15 teaches Christians the proper motivations involved with forgiveness. This passage is positioned after what is traditionally known as the Lord's Prayer. Jesus presents a model for prayer that includes three petitions for the Father's glory (Matt 6:9-10) and three petitions for the needs of his disciples (Matt 6:11-13).¹ Forgiveness is incorporated in Matthew 6:12. David L. Turner conveys that forgiveness "concerns the problems about which disciples pray."² Matthew 6:12 contains the principle of forgiveness and Matthew 6:14-15 communicates the motivations necessary for the Christian to maintain an attitude of forgiveness toward others.

¹ David Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 184.

² Turner, *Matthew*, 184.

God's Glory

William Hendricksen affirms that the priority of the Lord's Prayer is God's glory.³ Forgiveness should involve God's glory as the primary motivation. Jesus summarized the entire Law in two commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt 22:37). This command was prioritized first because giving God glory is where a Christian must begin. Jesus initiates his model prayer by focusing the worshipper's attention on the glory of God's name (Matt 6:9b), God's kingdom (Matt 6:10a), and God's will (Matt 6:10b).

God's name is hallowed when Christians maintain an attitude of forgiveness toward others. A name identifies someone with a person.⁴ Interestingly enough, the disciples in Antioch were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). In other words, they became known as "the partisans of Christ"⁵ The Antioch community recognized Barnabas and other disciples as not only those who proclaimed the message of Christ, but also as those who lived out the message with one another. Acts 11:26 does not indicate that the unbelievers in Antioch knew about Barnabas and the attitude of forgiveness he showed toward Paul. However, this is a great example of what forgiveness should look like to the unbelieving community. God's name is not glorified when Christians fail to practice forgiveness with one another.

Although Jesus already initiated the kingdom (Luke 4:21), there remains a "not yet" aspect of the kingdom of God.⁶ The "already" aspect involves a universal kingdom

³ William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 325.

⁴ Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew*, 327.

⁵ Craig S. Keener *Acts 3:1—14:28, An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 1847.

⁶ Gerrit Cornelis Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ: Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 110ff.

and this kingdom has always existed.⁷ The “already” also includes much of the mediatorial kingdom.⁸ The “not yet” concept “involves a people who are ruled and a territory over which they are ruled.”⁹

On a much smaller scale, God’s kingdom comes in the lives of his people as they maintain an attitude of forgiveness toward one another. Although the literal kingdom has yet to be initiated, there remains a kingdom now concept, which begins as one sinner at a time places his trust in Jesus’ substitutionary and propitiatory death on his behalf. The result of faith in Christ equates to being plucked out of the kingdom of darkness and transformed into the kingdom of light (Acts 16:18). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in a person’s life and enables him to no longer live for himself, but for Jesus, who died for him (Gal 2:20). Part of the application of living for Jesus is practiced when Christians forgive one another. Christians forgive others who are indebted to them by personal offenses in the same way God forgives them.¹⁰

God is glorified as his people live for his will rather than their own. God’s will is most clearly expressed in the Scriptures. If a Christian is living to please God, he will forgive others. It is part of his new spiritual DNA as a new creation in Christ. The Holy Spirit will not only enable the Christian to forgive offenses, but he will also give that

⁷ Paul Enns defines the universal kingdom in this way: “This form of the kingdom exists throughout all times (Lam. 5:19), includes all in time and space (Pss. 103:19; 139:7-10), and involves divine control of history (Isa. 44:26-45:4). The universal kingdom is God’s sovereign rule from eternity to eternity.” Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 368.

⁸ Alvin J. McClain articulates the mediatorial kingdom in this way: “This is (a) the rule of God through a divinely chosen representative who not only speaks and acts for God but also represents the people before God; (b) a rule which has especial reference to the earth; and (c) having as its mediatorial ruler one who is always a member of the human race.” Alvin J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974), 41.

⁹ Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 368.

¹⁰ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 253.

person the peace that surpasses all understanding. Like Jesus, he can say, “Not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

God Is the Disciples’ Heavenly Father

The second motivation for Christians to forgive others is detailed by the use of the word *father* in Matthew 6:14-15. The language of *father* is also employed by Jesus at the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer. The concept of intimately knowing God as Father by becoming a new creation in Christ was foreign to the first-century audience (John 3:1-14). Christians can look back at the cross today and understand how knowing God as Father is possible.

The New Testament teaches that unbelievers remain alienated from God because they are spiritually deceived, serving the prince of this world (Eph 2:1-2). Unbelievers are unrighteous and cannot know God as father (Rom 3:10-12), which is what Paul testified about in Ephesians 2:4-5: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.” Since Paul is teaching about justification, this kind of forgiveness is judicial.

Jesus is not referring to judicial forgiveness in Matthew 6:14-15. Instead, Jesus is expressing the consequences one will face after judicial forgiveness. Jay Adams articulates the consequences: “This fact not only emphasizes the need for forgiveness but in the commentary on the forgiveness clause in the Lord’s Prayer, makes the point that communication with the Father suffers whenever there is a refusal to reestablish communication with a brother or sister through forgiveness.”¹¹ Consequently, fellowship with God the Father will be hindered in the life of a Christian who refuses to forgive others of their trespasses. Communion with God may be restored through the avenue of

¹¹ Jay Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving: Learning to Forgive One Another* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Calvary Press, 1994), 38-39.

confessing one's sin to God in Christ (1 John 1:9). Craig Blomberg brings clarity to the issue: "The alienation that sin produces is predicated on our having forgiven those who have sinned against us."¹² In other words, Jesus is teaching that one's fellowship will be hindered if he chooses not to forgive his brother's trespasses. This reality should motivate Christians to forgive their offender from the heart.

The Disciples Daily Need for Forgiveness

The third motivation for Christians to forgive others is implied from knowing God as Father in Matthew 6:14-15. Christians need forgiveness from God as much as they need physical bread and spiritual protection (Matt 6:11-13).¹³ Although the needs of the disciples are secondary to God's glory, they are nonetheless important. Jesus emphasized the need for daily provisions in Matthew 6:11: "Give us this day our daily bread." "This day" and "daily" connote the neediness of Christians to be forgiven by God.

The need for daily forgiveness assumes that a Christian will sin after he is born again. John went as far as saying, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Yet the goal of the Christian life is to no longer live according to the flesh, but to live by the Spirit so that God will be glorified (Gal 2:20; 5:16). Although this is the goal, Christians will occasionally choose to give in to their sinful desires (Jas 1:14-15; 4:1-2) because they are involved in a real spiritual battle with the world, their remaining flesh, and the devil. Both the powers, principalities, and the world bombard Christians by tempting them with the lusts of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16-17). God holds his children responsible for the choices they make. Christians can choose to either obey God or live by their remaining flesh. The Holy Spirit enables them to choose righteousness and glorify the Father.

¹² Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 120.

¹³ William Hendricksen and Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 325.

God will intervene in the life of his children when they choose unrighteousness. First, as a heavenly Father, he helps them restrain evil by promising to discipline them as sons and daughters (Heb 12:5-11). He does this because, as a heavenly Father, he loves his children (Heb 12:7). He also disciplines his children so that they might share in his holiness (Heb 12:10). Furthermore, God's discipline procures fruit that makes his children look more like Christ (Heb 12:11).

Second, as a heavenly Father he provides provision for sin: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Biblical confession carries a threefold meaning. First, the sinner sees his sin the same way God does in his Word. Second, the sinner agrees with God's Word about his sin. Third, after he observes what God's Word says about his sin and agrees with God's Word, he commits to change his attitude toward his sin by committing himself to a lifestyle of living by the Spirit. When a sinner confesses his sin in this manner, God promises to forgive the sinner and continue in communion with him. This passage should motivate Christians to forgive others in the same manner.

The Daily Need for Others to Be Forgiven

The fourth motivation for Christians to forgive others concerns the daily need for others to be forgiven. As a Father, God cares about all his children's needs. The use of plural pronouns in the Lord's Prayer and also in Matthew 6:14-15 accentuates a community setting.¹⁴ D. A. Carson acknowledges that Jesus' repeated emphasis on forgiveness in these verses: "Stress the deep importance for the community of disciples to be a forgiving community if its prayers are to be effective (cf. Ps 66:18)."¹⁵

¹⁴ William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 1 (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 616.

¹⁵ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 175.

God expects his children to reciprocate the forgiveness they have received from him. Reciprocal forgiveness carries with it the idea that one cannot expect to be forgiven by God in the parental sense unless he forgives another's sin against him.¹⁶ It is hypocritical for Christians to suppose forgiveness from God and yet refuse to extend forgiveness to others.¹⁷ Since the forgiveness of sin was at the heart of Jesus' ministry (Matt 26:28), Christians will follow in his steps as they extend their forgiveness to those who sin against them. To those who are forgiven, much should forgive much (Matt 18:23-35; Luke 7:36-50). Duplicating Christ's forgiveness is part of what it means to be new creations in Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells them. Sinners need to be forgiven by God and by God's community of disciples.

Attitudinal Forgiveness: Christ-Centered Attitude of Worship

Mark 11:25 depicts attitudinal forgiveness most clearly in the New Testament: "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive your trespasses." Jesus is teaching his disciples a lesson from a withered fig tree. The context of this section correlates to Israel's divine judgment and ultimate fall.¹⁸ Jesus uses this moment with his disciples as an opportunity to apply lessons about prayer.

The situation that Jesus describes occurs as one is alone worshipping God in prayer. This is where Mark 11:25 is different from the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. Whereas, the Lord's Prayer emphasizes the importance of prayer in a communal setting, Mark 11:25 focuses on the individual and God. Nobody else is present during this occasion. This level of forgiveness pertains to the kind of attitude a worshipper should

¹⁶ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 252.

¹⁷ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 250.

¹⁸ Robert Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 521.

maintain as he communes with his heavenly Father. Furthermore, the language indicates that the worshiper should keep on forgiving.¹⁹ Practically, this means that the person will need to keep forgiving his offender when the offenses come to mind.

Jesus communicated the necessity of forgiving one's offender, "whenever." Whenever a worshiper stood praying, he needed to be cognizant of anyone that he would need to forgive. Jesus knew the importance of dealing with conflict quickly. Keeping short accounts and dealing with sin quickly keeps the devil from obtaining a foothold in unreconciled relationships (Eph 4:26-27).

Jesus made two conditions known to the worshiper. The first condition regarded the occasion of the situation: "If you have anything against anyone." This occurrence was important enough to alarm his disciples about the topic of forgiveness. The disciples would need to learn how to control their own attitude toward other sinning saints. They must be willing to forgive their offender because an unwilling attitude distorts worship and breaches communion with God.

The second condition is represented by the words, "so that." Jesus provides the reason why a disciple must forgive his offender from the heart: "So that your Father may forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25). The term "your Father" identifies this kind of forgiveness as parental. If the Christian is unwilling to forgive from his heart, then Jesus promises that communion with God will be affected. This person will experience guilt until he confesses his sin to the One who is faithful and just to forgive his sins (1 John 1:9).

Mark 11:25 not only expresses the necessity and conditions for attitudinal forgiveness, but this passage also demonstrates that attitudinal forgiveness is unconditional. It does not matter if the sinning saint has a willingness to reconcile the relationship. Consequently, attitudinal forgiveness can be an encouragement to the worshiper who

¹⁹ John Schwandt and C. John Collins, *The English-Greek Interlinear New Testament English Standard Version*, Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece, 27th rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 245-46.

desires to glorify God without the participation of the sinning party because the worshipper that commits to glorifying God through attitudinal forgiveness can have the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, even if reconciliation between him and his offender does not transpire.

The worshipper will glorify God as he commits to the following responsibilities. First, he will commit the sinner and his offenses against him to God. The worshipper will not be the one who vindicates the unreconciled sinner because vindication is God's responsibility (Rom 12:19). Moreover, if the sin is causing others to stumble, then the worshipper will trust in the process of church discipline (Matt 18:15-17). If the person who sinned against him is a believer, then he will entrust him to God's loving discipline (Heb 12:5-11). In cases involving a violation of the law, the worshipper will trust in the ministry of the civil authorities to punish evil (Rom 13:1-7).

Second, the worshipper will commit to guarding his heart against sinful emotions. He will take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:4-5). The worshipper will be transformed by the renewing of his mind by the Word of God (Rom 12:1-2). He will guard himself against cynicism, anger, and being critical toward his offender. In addition, he will not harbor animosity in his heart.

Third, the worshipper will commit himself to God.²⁰ He will follow in the footsteps of Jesus who entrusted himself to the Father under intense persecution (1 Pet 2:22-23). Paul Tripp says that this kind of trust in God "moves my heart from thoughts of vengeance to thoughts of reconciliation, from plans of judgment to purpose and love."²¹ The worshipper is less concerned about his own agenda; rather, he commits to God's agenda as he denies himself, takes up his cross, and follows Christ (Mark 8:34).

²⁰ Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 134.

²¹ Paul David Tripp, *War of Words: Getting to the Heart of Your Communication Struggles* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2000), 240-41.

Fourth, the worshipper will be committed to reconciliation since this is the goal of confrontation. Reconciliation must take place when two or more people are stumbling upon the sins of one another person. It becomes difficult to discern the kinds of sin that warrant repentance; nonetheless, reconciliation is always God's goal. The worshipper is in the process of learning to love the things God loves. God loves reconciliation.²²

Many things are accomplished when the worshipper commits these propositions to God. First, the worshipper glorifies God because of his obedience to Christ's command in Mark 11:25. The worshipper will obey God's commands regardless of how he feels. Second, the worshipper will not be controlled by sinful emotions and thereby be held captive to the devil's schemes. Third, following these principles inhibits the worshipper from taking matters into his own hands. He will not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21). Lastly, these principles of attitudinal forgiveness will transform the worshipper's perspective. Matthew 18:21-35 is a parable that illustrates a person who was forgiven much. When the worshipper contemplates how much he has been forgiven, the offenses against him will seem microscopic in comparison. Alfred Poirier astutely conveys this principle: "God calls you to consider the offense in terms of your own relationship with him—the one whom you've offended, who sought after you and forgave you."²³

Transactional Forgiveness: Christ-Centered Attitude of Reconciliation

Luke 17:3 characterizes transactional forgiveness most distinctly in the New Testament: "Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins rebuke him, and if he repents

²² One should note the passages that surround Matt 18:15-17. Cf. Matt 18:10-14; Matt 18:21-35. Jesus is stressing on one bookend the importance of one sheep that has gone astray and on the other bookend the vastness of God's forgiveness in relation to other who sin against his disciples.

²³ Alfred Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 155.

forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in a day, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” Jesus is teaching his disciples a lesson about an aspect of forgiveness that occurs between a sinning saint and a suffering saint.

In Luke 17:1-2, Jesus cautioned his disciples about causing other disciples to sin. Then, he described attitudinal forgiveness when he warned them to pay attention to themselves. In Matthew 7:5, Jesus conveyed a similar warning: “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye.”

After attitudinal forgiveness or confession occurs between the offended and God, or the offender and God, the involved unreconciled parties are prepared for transactional forgiveness to occur. Jesus provided a simple outline in Luke 17:3: sin, rebuke, repent, and forgive. Both the suffering saint and the sinning saint have responsibilities to fulfill if forgiveness is to transpire between unreconciled disciples. Biblical repentance on behalf of the sinning party must always proceed transactional forgiveness. Thus, transactional forgiveness is conditional. It is also horizontal in its scope because it takes place between the suffering saint and the sinning saint.

The principle of sin, rebuke, repent, and forgive is always applicable. A willingness to forgive means that the suffering Christian is always committed to pleasing God by forgiving his offender. He will commit to forgiving his offender as many as “seven times” in a day if necessary (Luke 17:4). Jesus is saying that the offended must forgive his offender based upon his word. He is not permitting the offended to become a fruit inspector, where a person might not be willing to forgive until he observes the fruits of repentance. Jesus reminded his disciples that in the space of a day one does not have the time necessary to measure the fruit (Luke 17:4).

Jesus commands his disciples to forgive the one who sinned against them. Since this was a command, Jesus also gives the grace necessary to fulfill the command. One can say that forgiveness is a supernatural act that consists of the Christian working with God the Spirit. The disciples understood the impossibility of the task. Therefore, they asked

Jesus to increase their faith (Luke 17:7-10). Jesus was direct with his disciples. He expected his disciples to always forgive the repentant sinner because this was their duty as slaves of Christ (Luke 17:10).

The goal of transactional forgiveness is reconciliation.²⁴ Luke 17:3 identified this forgiveness as familial: “If your brother sins.” These brothers belonged to Jesus. Since this was true, they were treating God’s children with care, gentleness, and compassion.

Transactional forgiveness completes the reconciliation process. It also hinders the work of the enemy and promotes the work of sanctification. God uses the offenses against suffering saints as occasions to look more like Christ as they are in the process of being conformed to his image (Rom 8:28-29). Oftentimes at the transactional stage of forgiveness, it will be necessary for other peacemakers to be involved in the process of reconciliation (Matt 18:16-17; Phil 4:2-3). Peacemakers should approach saints according to their greatest need. If a worshipper is suffering from another brother’s sin, then the peacemaker will help him commit to many things. First, he will encourage the worshipper to go to his offender (Matt 5:22-23). One must approach their offender tentatively; that is, he should seek to understand the other side of the situation. In addition, he should clear up any misconceptions, and most importantly, he must discern the difference between actual sin and personal preferences.

Second, the peacemaker will help the suffering saint by helping him envelop the characteristics of Christ. These can be discovered by looking at both the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5:22-23) and by modeling love as the sinner approaches the suffering Christian (1 Cor 13:1-7). The sinner will need to confess his sin to God and the person that he sinned against. Looking more like Christ as the goal should prevent unnecessary stumbling blocks from occurring.

²⁴ Turner, *Matthew*, 444.

Third, the peacemaker will help the suffering saint keep restoration as the goal. Sometimes reconciliation will not be possible. This could be because the sinning saint is unwilling to repent of his sin. If this is the case, then the suffering saint will not be able to restore the relationship with the sinning saint. Even if this is the case, God still expects the suffering saint to continue in the process of reconciliation. The peacemaker will need to help the suffering saint maintain a desire for reconciliation. The offended person must remain committed to his attitudinal commitments. Jesus still commands him to love the unrepentant sinner unconditionally.

There might be occasions where the sinning saint desires transactional forgiveness, but the suffering saint finds difficulty in forgiving his offender. In this case, the suffering saint moves simultaneously into the category of sinning saint and the peacemaker will need to counsel him according to his new actions. The sinning saint will need to repent of his unwillingness to forgive his brother. Furthermore, he will need to confess his sins by understanding what God thinks about forgiveness, agreeing with the verdict, commit to repent of that sinful actions, and walk in a direction that honors God.

If restoration does occur, the suffering saint promises his offender not to dwell upon the sin. If the forgiver dwells upon the sin after the transaction, then chances are likely that biblical forgiveness did not take place. The suffering saint also promises not to gossip to others about the sin. Lastly, he promises not to use the sin against his offender. He chooses, like God in the Old Testament, to remember the sin no more (Jer 31:34). The forgiver is not responsible for the thought of the sin against him, but he is held accountable by God for what he chooses to do with the thought (Jas 1:14-15; 2 Cor 10:4-5).

An Attitude of Faith in God's Provision: Christ-Centered Attitude of Faith in God's Provision

If the sinning saint refuses to transact forgiveness with the suffering saint, then the suffering saint must trust in God's provision put forth in Matthew 18:15-17. This passage is surrounded by parables that express the goal of the process of church discipline.

On the one side, the passage contains the teaching of Jesus about the parable of the lost sheep (Matt 18:10-14). The suffering saint should go after the sinning saint who has gone astray with the aim of restoring him to the fellowship of the saints.²⁵ On the other side of the passage is the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt 18:21-35). This passage teaches the suffering saint the kind of attitude he ought to express toward the sin of Christ's disciple. The suffering saint must forgive because God has forgiven him.

In addition to the surrounding passages, the suffering saint must remember Jesus' teaching at the beginning of Matthew 18. Jesus expects humility toward his little ones (vv. 1-6). The suffering saint must not become the cause of a disciple's stumbling. In fact, he should be Christ-like in his approach as he moves toward the sinning saint. If he approaches his sinning brother in this manner, then he will not become a stumbling block for him (Matt 18:7-9). Instead, it will be easier for the sinning saint to repent of his sins, rather than continue in his rebellion and unrepentance. The passage in Matthew 18:15-17 cannot be divorced from these realities.

Three-Fold Action Plan

Jesus is the highest authority in heaven and on earth. As such, he gave his church full authority to exercise church discipline. The prayers of the saints in those local communities will be heard as their prayers for the sinning saint align with the prayers of the Head of the church.²⁶ He is present with them as they carry out what many evangelicals describe as church discipline (Matt 18:20).

The action plan has been described as "household rules for dealing with

²⁵ Hendricksen and Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew*, 444.

²⁶ William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 2 (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 788-89.

conflict”²⁷ because the conflict that Jesus is describing concerns two Christians.²⁸ These guidelines must be observed in light of three hypothetical case studies. The emphasis of the passage switches from the one who causes Jesus’ little ones to sin (Matt 18:1-14) to focusing on the disciple who has been sinned against.²⁹ The suffering Christian in conflict will glorify God by living out the three-fold action plan.

Personal confrontation. The first action plan in Matthew 18:15 depicts the suffering saint going alone to the sinning saint: “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.” The reason Jesus provides for going is depicted by the phrase, “against you.” Peter responded to Jesus by exaggerating this same phrase (Matt 18:21). The suffering saint thereby takes the initiative.³⁰ He cannot adapt an attitude like Cain: “Am I my brother’s keeper” (Gen 4:9)?³¹ Jesus would declare that the suffering Christian is one of his brother’s keepers.

The suffering saint must approach the sinning saint alone. At this level, sin has affected God, the suffering saint, and the sinning saint. Therefore, the suffering saint is commanded to keep this matter private. It is not to be brought out into the open.³²

Both the suffering saint and sinning saint are responsible to God for different tasks. The suffering saint is instructed by Jesus to “tell him his fault” (Matt 18:15). Leon Morris renders the translation as “reprove him his fault.”³³ The suffering saint is supposed

²⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 781.

²⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 782.

²⁹ The language I use for this kind of person is *suffering Christian*.

³⁰ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 467.

³¹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 692.

³² Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 467.

³³ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 467.

to go with the intention of convincing and convicting the sinning saint of his sin.³⁴

Donald A. Carson expresses that the task of the suffering saint is to persuade him of his sin.³⁵ The focus of the meeting and confrontation is to attack the sin. Evidence should be clearly presented for this task to be accomplished. The suffering saint must uphold a Christ-like attitude as he interacts with his offender. If the sinning saint repents, his task is to forgive his brother from his heart. The responsibility of the sinning saint is to listen to his brother. The word for listen goes beyond simply hearing. He will hear with the purpose of obeying.³⁶ Obeying in this instance will mean repenting of his sin.

Repentance, forgiveness, and restoration to fellowship are the desired outcomes for this meeting. Matthew 18:15 says, “If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” The word for “gained” can also be understood as “win over.”³⁷ Paul used this term evangelistically.³⁸ It is a beautiful play on words, especially considering the parable of the lost sheep (Matt 18:10-14). The sinning saint is not won over by salvation; rather, the sinning saint is restored to the fold of God’s flock.

Peacemakers confrontation. The second action plan necessitates the suffering saint take others with him to his offender. This is the second hypothetical case Jesus presents. Matthew 6:14-15 and Mark 11:25 related to the kind of attitude the suffering saint must maintain in the vertical direction toward God. The last two passages express what must happen for transactional forgiveness to occur between two disciples of the same household of faith. Luke 17:3-4 was Jesus’ instruction as it related to the sinning saint repenting and asking for forgiveness.

³⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 788-89.

³⁵ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 783.

³⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 783.

³⁷ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 278.

³⁸ Carson, *Matthew*, 402.

If a sinning saint repents of his sin, then the brother is won over, forgiveness is granted, and he is welcomed back into the church. Jesus' first action plan in this passage was similar to Luke 17:3-4. Matthew 18:16 provides a different scenario: "But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." Jesus gave these instructions to the suffering saint for occasions when the first action plan does not work out. There is still hope for the suffering saint's relationship to be restored. Jesus is calling for increased pressure and exposure of sin.

The hypothetical case study begins by the second conditional "if" clause.³⁹ The sinning saint, for whatever reason, has refused to listen to the suffering saint's persuasion about his sin. The suffering saint does not drop out of the process by handing the sinning saint over to the leadership in the church. On the contrary, he remains involved as he takes two or three others with him to confront the sinning saint of his sin and tries to convince him to repent. The group of people are also members of the same household of faith. They must be those who observe the sin and consider it important enough to confront. Although it is not stated in the passage, these witnesses should be wise in the way of Christ, full of integrity, and possess a good reputation within the community of Christ.⁴⁰

Their purpose is stated as serving as witnesses and establishing charges against the sinning saint.⁴¹ They must examine the charges of sin from the suffering saint. Their role does not involve taking sides. Instead, it should be to organize the facts objectively

³⁹ Turner, *Matthew*, 443.

⁴⁰ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 278.

⁴¹ The original audience most likely would have correlated Deut 19:15 with Jesus' teachings. One must be cautious in making the text mean something that it does not say. In this instance, the context and audience are different. Whereas Deut 19:15 relates more to a judicial judgment, the passage in Matt 18:15-17 is in the context of the community of disciples. In other words, sin is the issue and Jesus is the solution.

and take them captive to the Word of God (2 Cor 10:4-5).⁴² These witnesses represent the household of faith. Consequently, if the rebellion continues, these witnesses will bring the charges to the local church assembly.

Public confrontation. The third action plan calls for the suffering saint and the witnesses to bring the matter to the local congregation.⁴³ At this point, the containment of the sinning saint's sin is no longer possible.⁴⁴ It has moved from a private to public matter.

This plan has two possible outcomes. The first outcome is positive. Although it is not directly stated in Matthew 18:17, it is implied from the context. The purpose of the increased pressure from the church still has as its aim the restoration of the wayward and unrepentant saint. The increased pressure is meant to open the ears of the sinning saint and cause that person to repent of his sin. This would entail the winning back of the brother or sister in Christ to the fellowship of the saints.

The second outcome is negative. Jesus commands his disciples to make the sinner's sin known to the church.⁴⁵ The role of the church is to come alongside the suffering saint to convince the sinning saint to listen and repent.⁴⁶ If the sinning saint refuses to listen and repent, then Jesus provides more details for his church. The plan involves individual and corporate responsibilities.

The individual who began the process of loving confrontation has the responsibility to treat the sinning Christian as a Gentile and tax collector. Jesus uses the singular personal pronoun "to you" in Matthew 18:17. The suffering Christian will now

⁴² Carson, *Matthew*, 403.

⁴³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 785.

⁴⁴ John Noland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 746.

⁴⁵ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 468.

⁴⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 785.

treat the sinning Christian as one who is cut off from the fellowship of the saints. Morris clarifies what it means to treat someone as a tax collector and Gentile: “Both these expressions stand for people outside the people of God, people who have sinned and not repented.”⁴⁷

Individuals in the church are also responsible for treating the sinning Christian in the same manner.⁴⁸ The individuals that make up the local gathering will hold each other accountable by committing to keep the unrepentant sinner from the fellowship, which includes all services or gatherings. The church is called to follow the pattern of the Old Testament and cut the person off from God’s gathered disciples (Gen 17:14; Exod 12:15, 19; 30:33, 39).⁴⁹

Conclusion

These passages clearly demonstrate Jesus’ instruction to his church. The gathered disciples must cultivate both an attitude of forgiveness and an openness to forgive others. Jesus’ teaching reflects dynamic scenarios when unrepentant sin is present and is causing disciples to stumble in the community of faith. Saints can be on either side of the spectrum where forgiveness or repentance is commanded. Reconciliation cannot occur without the suffering saint and sinning saint fulfilling their God-given role. In cases where one saint is disobedient, Jesus calls upon the authority of his church to help restore the wayward sinner. Jesus is faithful to the process of restoration and he promises to be with his church always, “to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20).

⁴⁷ Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 469.

⁴⁸ Carson, *Matthew*, 403.

⁴⁹ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 279.

CHAPTER 3

HINDRANCES TO ATTITUDINAL FORGIVENESS

To fortify Christ's teaching on attitudinal forgiveness, Christians must learn to practice discernment in the midst of unbiblical forgiveness issues. This chapter focuses on three unbiblical teachings that may hinder attitudinal forgiveness from taking place. Three specific topics were selected according to a Great Commandment orientation.¹ Great Commandment orientation focuses on God first, others second, and on self last. The first issue pertained to the worshipper's heart orientation toward God. Attitudinal forgiveness will not take place if a person holds to a view that teaches that he needs to forgive God for his current situation. The second issue concerned the worshipper's heart orientation toward others. Forgetting the sins of others is an issue that may hinder attitudinal forgiveness from occurring. The third issue related to one's heart orientation

¹ Several counseling issues may hinder attitudinal forgiveness from taking place. For example, Jay Adams, in chap. 14 of *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, identifies two obstacles of forgiveness: (1) healing of memories, and (2) modern psychology. Jay Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving: Learning to Forgive One Another* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Calvary Press, 1994), 118-25. In chap. 6, Adams identifies five more errors concerning forgiveness: (1) forgive and forget, (2) apologizing, (3) forgiving God, (4) forgiving yourself, and (5) the unforgivable sin. Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 56-67. In addition to Adams, Chris Brauns, in Appendix 1 of *Unpacking Forgiveness*, expressed more hindrances to forgiveness: (1) salvation, (2) forgiving God, (3) forgiving yourself, (4) the unforgivable sin, (5) the concept of unequally yoked, (6) cases of adultery and forgiveness, and (7) forgiveness is not granted by the suffering Christian. Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Answers for Complex Questions and Deep Wounds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 195-206. John MacArthur includes a similar discussion in chap. 9 of *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*. He includes a discussion on many of the same hindrances listed by Adams and Brauns. Along with those hindrances, MacArthur includes more issues that can hinder forgiveness from taking place: (1) the idea of confessing one's thoughts to the offended person, (2) whether one is responsible to address his actions of unfaithfulness, (3) how to handle repeat offenses, (4) assessing one's repentance as genuine, (5) the issue of restitution, and (6) forgiving those who are dead. John MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 183-91.

concerns himself. Attitudinal forgiveness may be hindered if a person believes he must forgive himself in order to forgive others.

Forgiving God

The first common misconception that may hinder attitudinal forgiveness pertains to the idea of forgiving God. When a difficult situation occurs in the life of a Christian it is important for that person to discern unbiblical counsel that will certainly arise. There are usually two extremes to guard against as it concerns handling a difficult situation. The first extreme is related to the idea of simply sweeping emotions under a rug and not saying anything to God.² The second extreme relates to venting one's anger toward God and even forgiving God for allowing unwanted circumstances in a person's life.³ Betty Tapscott is an advocate of the latter view and counsels people to forgive God for things such as a person's genetic make-up.⁴ Lewis Smedes has also been influential in propagating the concept of forgiving God. He states, "I think that we may need to forgive God after all. Now and then, but not often. Not for His sake. For ours!"⁵

Marcia Webb is a professor who teaches psychology at Seattle Pacific University. Webb believes that the only way to resolve anger with God is to forgive God of perceived wrongs.⁶ She argues, "Regardless of the perfections of God, the complexity of the human spirit may still call us to consider the seemingly illogical phenomena not

² Robert Jones, *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2005), 113.

³ Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 114.

⁴ Betty Tapscott, *Set Free through Inner Healing* (Houston: Hunter Ministries, 1978), 35.

⁵ Lewis B. Smedes, *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts That We Don't Deserve* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 119.

⁶ Marcia Webb, "Forgiving God: Reflections on Psychological Research Describing Spiritual Struggle," *Theology Today* 71, no. 3 (2014): 342.

just of anger toward, but also forgiveness for, God.”⁷ Webb teaches that forgiveness is an individual, personal, and psychological event.⁸

A prevalent view of forgiving God held among some Christians may be expressed in another form that does not appear to be extreme on the surface. Robert Kendall is an evangelical Christian who is careful in his approach to forgive God. In *Totally Forgiving God*, Kendall writes, “Of course, the idea of ‘forgiving God will certainly ruffle some feathers, but the point here is so clear: God is perfect, and just yet our hearts often hold bitterness towards Him—and we need to let that bitterness go and trust God.”⁹ Kendall teaches his readers that although God is never guilty, there may be troublesome times for a person where he will learn to affirm God as he is revealed in the Scriptures.¹⁰ Kendall’s man-centered approach permits a person that is suffering to set God free in order that a sufferer can be free. Setting God free means forgiving God and embracing the reality that God permitted horrible things to happen in his life.¹¹ Kendall teaches his readers that when they let God off the hook their life will be transformed, and they will never be the same again.¹²

Forgiving God Is Unnecessary because It Is an Affront to God

The concept of forgiving God is an affront to God. The weight of this statement can be more fully grasped as one identifies the particulars associated with attitudinal forgiveness.

⁷ Webb, “Forgiving God,” 342.

⁸ Webb, “Forgiving God,” 340.

⁹ Robert Tillman Kendall, *Totally Forgiving God* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2012), xvii.

¹⁰ Kendall, *Totally Forgiving God*, 23.

¹¹ Kendall, *Totally Forgiving God*, 23.

¹² Kendall, *Totally Forgiving God*, 21.

The offender is never God. Attitudinal forgiveness involves the worshipper's unconditional and personal heart response to God. The sufferer is always responsible to maintain a godly attitude toward his offender as he communes with God. In some cases where forgiving God is concerned, the situation can become the problem rather than the offender. Proponents of the viewpoint to forgive God would argue that since God permitted the situation to occur when he could have prevented it—God becomes the offender. David Powlison discerns the problem: “People will often blame God when what they have lived for comes up empty.”¹³

By definition, God is holy and sinless.¹⁴ Since God is sinless, the suffering Christian should never feel it is necessary to forgive God. When a Christian forgives God, he is acting in a way that is incompatible with theology. Job learned, despite his tragic circumstances, that he could not find fault with God. Job expresses the reality of a sinless God: “Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it” (Job 40:32). After God's response in Job 38-41, Job responds: “I know that you can do all things” (Job 42:6). Although Job complained to God, he was not found guilty of blaming God for his tragic situation. Robert Jones applies Job's response to God: “He remained faithful to God—even when his questions were not answered.”¹⁵

The suffering Christian is under God's judgment. The moment a suffering Christian accuses God of wrongdoing he becomes a sinning Christian. At this point, the conscience will render a person guilty necessitating confession and repentance. The sinning Christian will need to repent for his communion with God to be restored to God (1 John 1:9).

¹³ David Powlison, *Good and Angry: Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 219.

¹⁴ John 8:46; Rom 5:21, 8:3; Heb 4:15; 1 John 3:5; 1 Pet 2:22

¹⁵ Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 122.

Rather than believing God to be the sovereign, wise, and good Judge over all his circumstances, the misguided sufferer will take God's rightful place and dethrone God in his heart.¹⁶ Robert Jones illustrates this clearly with his "Throne-Staircase Diagram."¹⁷ Jones depicts what happens in the heart of a worshipper before the bad fruit is demonstrated: "We accuse God of not doing *what* (action or inaction) he should do, or not doing it in the *way* (manner) he should, or not doing it *when* (timing) he should. In short, we want what we want when we want it, and when God does not deliver, we judge him."¹⁸

Jones utilized the stair-case analogy to demonstrate what occurs within the heart of a believer as he responds to his situation. Jesus is represented as the cross in the throne-staircase diagram and is properly positioned on a throne with a staircase as Lord over all desires. These desires remain godly so long as they continue to be in submission under Christ's throne. However, godly desires become inordinate sinful desires when they are controlled by the flesh rather than the Spirit (Gal 5:16).¹⁹

For example, a suffering Christian may respond to his situation by wanting peace.²⁰ The desire for peace is not necessarily a bad desire when properly controlled by the Lordship of Christ. When a suffering Christian does not get the peace he desires and he responds by becoming angry with God, then he has become a sinning Christian who

¹⁶ The concept of a sovereign, wise, and good God was developed from Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1990). This book identifies God as sovereign, wise, and loving. I have exchanged the word "love" for "good."

¹⁷ Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 65-66.

¹⁸ Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 115.

¹⁹ The concept of inordinate desires was adapted from Lou Priolo, *Resolving Conflict: How to Make, Disturb, and Keep Peace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2016), 191.

²⁰ Suffering Christians may respond to their circumstances by desiring many things that control them at the heart-level. Although I have used peace as one example, the same "Throne-Staircase Diagram" would apply to other desires.

needs to repent. As the inordinate desire for peace moves up the staircase, that desire will contend with Jesus' lordship. If repentance does not occur, Christ will be temporarily dethroned, and self will rule. At this point, rather than living to please God by hallowing his name, kingdom, and will (Matt 6:9-10), the suffering Christian will become his own judge.

In the courtroom of his own heart the suffering Christian may conclude that God does not do everything for a reason. He may also deny that God causes all things to work together for his own glory and for the good of his people (Rom 8:28). The suffering Christian may also deny the biblical reality that God is using the trial to conform him into the image of his Son (Rom 8:29). Furthermore, judgment may continue to assault the faithfulness of God (1 Cor 10:13). He might assert that he is alone in his suffering, that God will not provide the way of escape, that God is testing him beyond his ability, and that God is not helping him endure through his trial (1 Cor 10:13). In addition to this reasoning, the suffering Christian may deny the biblical reality that God's grace is sufficient through his trial and that in his weakness, God's power is manifested (2 Cor 12:9-10).

The suffering Christian may even gather false counsel into the court of his own heart. David Powlison identifies four ways that a Christian may be held captive to unbiblical thinking.²¹ First, a suffering Christian may believe that since anger is an emotion given by God to the sufferer then he can be content with directing that anger toward God.²² Second, the suffering Christian may presume that God in his omnipotence could have stopped their present circumstances from occurring, but chose not to stop the hardships.²³ Jones articulates this kind of thinking in the following way: "God does not have just cause

²¹ Powlison, *Good and Angry*, 223-24.

²² Powlison, *Good and Angry*, 223.

²³ Powlison, *Good and Angry*, 223.

to send calamity and that the situation should have never occurred.²⁴ Third, because of the reality that God chose not to intervene, the Christian may be counseled to vent his anger at God.²⁵ Last, this downward spiral of thinking moves further away from God as the sufferer justifies the solution to his problem as having to forgive God for not doing anything about his circumstances.²⁶

The suffering Christian needs to guard his heart. The suffering Christian, because of Christ's disarming work on the cross (Col 2:15), can choose to please God amid his situation by exalting God's name, kingdom, and will. Although Powlison's four ways of unbiblical counsel are temptations, the Christian can win the spiritual battle by walking in the Spirit and refusing to gratify the desires of the heart (Gal 5:16). Paul demonstrated how to win in the battle raging in the heart in 2 Corinthians 10:5. Paul says, "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ." Consequently, the battle must be won in the heart.²⁷ Thus, if the suffering Christian submits to Christ in the midst of his sinful passions warring within his heart (Jas 4:1) and refuses to be lured and enticed by the inordinate desire (Jas 1:14), then he will not sin against God.

The suffering Christian needs to repent. However, what if the suffering Christian sins by giving control over to his flesh at the point of decision? The sinning Christian will need to confess his sin to Christ (1 John 1:9) and count on God's

²⁴ Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 119.

²⁵ Powlison, *Good and Angry*, 223.

²⁶ Powlison, *Good and Angry*, 224.

²⁷ The heart of man consists of the inter-related and overlapping functions of cognition, affection, and volition. For a further rendering of these ideas, see Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016).

forgiveness.²⁸ A Christian will sin against God when his desire is not kept under the lordship of Christ.²⁹ What begins as a temptation from the situation becomes a lure that may lead to a downward spiral of thinking. This thinking culminates in blasphemous behavior whereby the sinning Christian may think that he has authority to forgive God. Yet, the sinning Christian needs to repent. In addition to repentance, he should want to be renewed and transformed in his thinking as he takes his sinful thoughts captive and makes those thoughts obedient to God's Word (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 10:5).

Forgiving God Is Unnecessary because of God's Attributes

The suffering Christian will never learn to run to God as a refuge if he does not understand the truth of Deuteronomy 29:29: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."³⁰ In most situations the sufferer will not understand the "why" involved with their trial.³¹ However, the hope contained in this verse can be found in the "what" of the revealed things. In other words, the sufferer finds hope in the Scriptures because the Word of God reveals the "who" behind the trials.

God is sovereign, wise, and good. Life's hardships are authorized by God.

The seemingly intolerable difficulties of life emerge because God allows them to come

²⁸ Rich Thomson, *The Heart of Man and the Mental Disorders: How the Word of God is Sufficient*. 2nd ed. (Alief, TX: Biblical Counseling Ministries, 2012), 112-13.

²⁹ Jones explains his throne-staircase diagram in the following way: The placement of the desires *under* the throne is significant. In a well-ordered life that follows Jesus, our desires—whether met or unmet—are submitted and subordinated to Jesus. In fact, a large part of the art of living for Jesus is learning to live contentedly with ongoing unmet desires. When my desires remain submitted to Christ, my soul finds rest. Inner peace reigns." (Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 65)

³⁰ The concept of running to God as a refuge was adapted from Nancy Leigh DeMoss, *Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 161.

³¹ Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness*, 198.

about. Jones gives an accurate summary: “God is the ultimate cause of every hardship.”³² First Corinthians 10:13 demonstrates God’s sovereignty, wisdom, and goodness: “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure through it.” This passage provides five promises that can be applied to a Christian as he is going through a trial. God’s attributes of either sovereignty, wisdom, or goodness are the root for the fruit of these promises.

The first promise is that a suffering Christian is never alone in their trial. The sovereign God has designed the world in such a way that others experience similar trials. God’s goodness is also depicted here because Christians are never alone in their suffering. God’s Son experienced trials and temptations, which is why Hebrews 4:14-15 discloses that Christians have a high priest who is able to sympathize with those who are weak. Additionally, the prophet Isaiah identifies Jesus as one who understands the sorrows and griefs of his people (Isa 53:3-4).³³

The second promise that exhibits God’s wisdom and sovereignty in hardship is the biblical reality that God will not tempt a suffering Christian beyond his ability. Simply put, because God is sovereign and wise, suffering Christians will not be crushed under the weight of whatever situation God has authorized in their life. Paul understood this promise: “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor 4:8-9). Heath Lambert describes the omniscient nature of God: “Omniscience means that God

³² Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 121.

³³ In Isa 53:3, Isaiah says that Jesus is “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” This is a general description of Jesus’ personal struggles on earth as the incarnated Son of God. However, Isa 53:4 uses personal pronouns, “our griefs” and “our sorrows.” These pronouns are specific to individual sufferers. Consequently, the suffering Christian is never alone because Jesus bore sorrow and grief on the cross. Therefore, he is acquainted with individual human emotions.

always knows what is best.”³⁴ Accordingly, God is not only sovereign in his ability to set the perfect boundaries by understanding the sufferer’s ability, but he also knows, in his wisdom, exactly what is good for his people. God is wise because he knows precisely what to do with his power and knowledge.

The third promise also reflects God’s wisdom and sovereignty. God will provide the way of escape for a suffering Christian going through a difficult trial. God, in his sovereignty, has the ability to provide the way of escape. The use of the definite article in the phrase, “the way of escape,” reveals God’s sovereignty because there are not many ways or even “a” way of escape. Rather, the text says, “the way.” God can orchestrate the way of escape in the midst of a fallen world, with a fallen ruler (2 Cor 4:4), because he is God. God is wise, not only in ability to set specific boundaries for his people, but he is also able to provide the way of escape. As a result of this this third promise, the suffering Christian is without excuse if he chooses to sin.³⁵

The fourth promise testifies to God’s goodness. God will help the suffering Christian endure through trials. Matthew’s gospel records, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)” (Matt 1:23). “God with us” is the hope of the gospel. Thus, when God promises to join the suffering Christian in his trial, this truth alone can bring hope. God is a good and loving God. He not only sets the boundaries and provides the way of escape, but he also goes through the trial with his people. Suffering Christians are never alone in their suffering because of this reality.

The fifth promise envelops all the other promises. God is faithful. In other words, God is good and true to his promises. In God’s sovereignty and wisdom, he causes

³⁴ Heath Lambert, *Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 117.

³⁵ The way of escape for the temptation to forgive God is discussed in the biblical lamenting section.

all things to work together for his own glory and for the sufferer's good (Rom 8:28). God is faithful amid adversity. In his goodness he conforms the suffering Christian into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Suffering saints, because of God's faithfulness, can learn the truth of Lamentations 3:22-23 as they face turmoil: "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Forgiving God Is Unnecessary because of Biblical Lamenting

Fortunately, the suffering saint is permitted to reverently express his sorrow and grief to God. This is known as biblical lamenting. Reverently expressing one's sorrow in grief to God in faith involves perceiving the difficult situation as it relates to the sovereign, wise, and good God. It is necessary for the suffering Christian to recognize not only God's character, but it is also essential that he apprehends God's greater purpose for the trial. Romans 8:28 reveals God's hidden agenda for Christians and they experience trials: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." The text does not describe how God causes all things to work together, yet the Scriptures do teach that the secret things belong to God (Deut 29:29). Since God is sovereign, wise, and good, the suffering Christian can trust God with his secret purpose portrayed in Romans 8:28. Biblical lamenting will take any thoughts captive that attack God's character and decretive will.³⁶ If the suffering Christian loses in the battle to take his thoughts captive, he will need to repent of his ongoing battle with sin (1 John 1:9).

The second half of Deuteronomy 29:29 identifies the sufferer's responsibility as he goes through a trial: "But the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." Thus, the sufferer is responsible for

³⁶ Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 127.

working with God to build his life upon the Word of God in the midst of the storms of life (Matt 7:24-27). Building on the Scriptures requires an understanding that the “good” depicted in Romans 8:28 is equated with the phrase, “to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8:29). The suffering Christian must follow in the footsteps of the Second Adam (1 Pet 2:21).

Jesus demonstrated biblical lamenting in John 12:27: “Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father save me from this hour.’” Although the details of Jesus’ situation are not recorded in the passage, interpreters understand that his troubled soul occurred before the cross. Maybe Jesus is wrestling with his future death on the cross and all the details that surround that event. As the Second Adam, he is tempted to escape from the situation. Instead, Jesus remembers God’s character and purposes as he prays: “But for this purpose I have come to this hour” (John 12:27). Jesus continued entrusting himself to the Father throughout his earthly ministry (1 Pet 2:23). Jesus could trust his Father’s character and purposes. Furthermore, Jesus was able to entrust himself to the Father because he knew the revealed Word of God.³⁷

Biblical lamenting also requires aligning one’s will with God’s will. Jesus demonstrated this principle in John 12:28: “Father, glorify your name.” Jesus perfectly discerned God’s character and purposes. As a result, he was never in a place where he was not in communion with the Father. Sometimes, because the sufferer is human, he will have to ask God to help with unbelief (Mark 9:24). Jones rightly recognizes that the sufferer must “learn to acknowledge God, in honest faith and submission.”³⁸ This acknowledgment needs to include both feelings and thoughts.³⁹ A person’s thoughts and

³⁷ Jesus, as a man, learned Isa 53, for example. He also would have learned the Old Testament Scriptures as a boy.

³⁸ Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 127.

³⁹ Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 127.

feelings toward God should not be careless, but instead their thoughts should be reverent in the manner that they pray to God.⁴⁰

Following the example of Christ in biblical lamenting will ultimately lead to the volition of obeying God. The worshipper should obey God regardless of how he feels toward him about his situation.⁴¹ John 12:28 confirms the Father's satisfaction with his Son's request to glorify his name: "Then a voice came from heaven: 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'" Those who are suffering amid a difficult trial can obey God in every occasion by glorifying the name of the Father.

Forgetting the Sins of Others

Another common misconception that can hinder attitudinal forgiveness involves the idea of forgetting the sins of others. Many American Evangelicals hold to one of two kinds of extremes relating to their past. The first extreme teaches that the past has no bearing whatsoever on a person's present circumstances. Advocates of this viewpoint tend to focus on modifying one's behavior.⁴² Bob Gass is an advocate of teaching people to forget their past by looking to the future. Gass utilizes passages such as Genesis 41:50 and Philippians 3:13 to support his understanding of forgetting the past. Gass writes, "Paul understood that the forgetting and reaching are the keys to inner healing."⁴³

The second extreme teaches that a person's present struggles have everything to do with their past. Consequently, people find their identity in who they are because of their shaping influences.⁴⁴ Steve Viars articulates this idea: "You fail today because you

⁴⁰ Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 127.

⁴¹ Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 127.

⁴² Steve Viars, *Putting Your Past in Its Place* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2011), 17.

⁴³ Bob Gass, *Forgetting Your Past* (Gainesville, FL: Bridgelogos, 2000), 6.

⁴⁴ The idea of shaping influences is taught in Tedd Tripp's book, *Shaping Influences* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2005), chap. 2.

were abused in the past. Your love cup is only half full. Your deep personal needs were not adequately met. Your wounded inner child is creating emotional pain. Your memories need to be healed. Today's choices are not your fault because you are being ruthlessly driven by your past."⁴⁵

Thus, if a person's present circumstances are controlled by their past, then one way to help a person is what is known as memory erasure.⁴⁶ Betty Tapscott offers a solution: "In praying for inner healing we ask Jesus to walk back into our past and heal every hurt, to take a spiritual eraser and wipe away every painful memory."⁴⁷

Another extreme form of the past representing everything is Neil Anderson's understanding of what he calls "Bondage Breaker." Anderson believes that a person is in bondage to their past because evil spirits have been given freedom to rule in the life of a person. The first step involved with breaking demonic bondages has to do with digging into the past and renouncing everything from one's interaction with hypnotism to satanic activities.⁴⁸ Anderson believes that a person cannot have hope in his current situation unless these demonic bondages in the past are broken.

Extreme viewpoints may inhibit a person struggling with his sinful past to stumble at the point of decision. For this reason, it is important for the Christian to identify what God's Word teaches about one's past. God's creative design for man involves a capacity for him to remember his past. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that the past serves as a reminder to Christians (1 Tim 1:12-17). Remembering the past helps people learn from the bad fruit of their behavior that may have hurt others. If there were consequences

⁴⁵ Viars, *Putting Your Past in Its Place*, 17.

⁴⁶ Betty Tapscott and Robert DeGrandis, *Forgiveness and Inner Healing* (Houston: Tapscott INSE, 1980), 13.

⁴⁷ Tapscott and DeGrandis, *Forgiveness and Inner Healing*, 13.

⁴⁸ Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2019), 214-16.

involved, then memories can be a fruitful reminder of what to avoid when similar motives continue in their present situation. The human experience also involves learning from godly behaviors that may have blessed others. Godly behaviors are also controlled by Spirit-filled motives and good consequences.

The past will also serve the Christian in various ways. First, the past is an instrument God utilizes to help a person look more like Christ and less like his old self (Gal 2:20). The past could also enable a counselor to help his counselee see himself more clearly (Heb 3:13). The past also functions to deepen repentance and heighten thanksgiving.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the past may also procure broader effectiveness when ministering to others (2 Cor 1:3-7).

God's Person

Advocates of the idea of forgetting the sins of others cite passages such as Jeremiah 31:34 and Isaiah 43:25 and argue that since God forgets sins then consequently Christians should also forget the sins of others.⁵⁰ The phrase, "I will remember your sins no more" is the key phrase that must be interpreted correctly. Forgetting the sins of others is unbiblical because of God's Person and God's promise.

The Person who stands behind the promise is God. He is omniscient. God, in his nature, does not forget about a person's sins. God does not have amnesia, nor does he erase someone's memory, or even deny a person's sin. In fact, he is unable to forget something.⁵¹ Jay Adams clearly points out, "The omniscient God who created and sustains

⁴⁹ Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, 72.

⁵⁰ MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*, 189.

⁵¹ MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*, 189.

the universe does not forget, but He can ‘not remember.’”⁵² Nancy DeMoss offers her own conclusion: “How can a God who knows everything forget anything?”⁵³

God is also omnipotent. The Bible portrays God as both Almighty and the Sovereign Judge (Eccl 12:14; Matt 12:36-37). As such, all sin will be judged (Heb 4:13). God’s omnipotence in judgment requires that God does not forget the sins of others.

God’s Promise

How can a God who will bring sinners to the throne of judgment forget sins? The dilemma of God’s forgetfulness causes a problem for proponents who teach that God forgets sins. Jeremiah and Isaiah do not teach that God forgets sins.

Forget. Both Jeremiah and Isaiah used the word “remember” and not “forget.” These words have distinguishable differences. Forgetting is passive. In other words, when a person forgets something, he does not have control over this kind of reaction.⁵⁴ Forgetting something relates more to “escaping notice.”⁵⁵ Whereas Jeremiah and Isaiah used the word “remember,” Paul employs the word “forgetting” in Philippians 3:13. Yet, Paul is not teaching the church in Philippi that they should forget their past. Paul demonstrates the importance of recalling the past in passages such as 1 Timothy 1:12-15.⁵⁶ The concept of forgetting in Philippians 3:13-14 has more to do with “not taking notice.”⁵⁷ Thus, Paul is declaring that he would not take notice of anything in his past that might keep him from

⁵² Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 12.

⁵³ Nancy DeMoss, *Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 175.

⁵⁴ Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 58.

⁵⁵ John Broger, *Self-Confrontation: A Manual for In-Depth Biblical Discipleship* (Palm Desert, CA: Biblical Counseling Foundation, 1991), 205.

⁵⁶ Broger, *Self-Confrontation*, 205.

⁵⁷ Broger, *Self-Confrontation*, 205.

the “goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13). Paul was asserting that his past could thwart that purpose because the past that Paul was calling to mind related to the self-righteous way by which he was approaching God.⁵⁸ Furthermore, forgetting does not necessitate that a person deny his past.⁵⁹

Remember. The second word is “remember.” The action of not remembering something is active.⁶⁰ If a person chooses not to remember then he will refuse to call past events to his mind.⁶¹ Although a person has no control over what is brought to mind, he maintains control of what he chooses to dwell upon or think about. Another aspect of defining “remember” is associated with the concept of not keeping accounts.⁶² God holds people accountable to not remember in these sinful ways. This is why not remembering is commanded in Scripture.

Psalm 25:7 is an illustration of what it means to not remember: “Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgression.” David is calling on the Lord to not remember, or more specifically, not to mention his sins and transgressions from his youth.⁶³ God would have to choose not to remember David’s youthful sins. David was asking God to not keep a record of his sin and “not to mention or bring [those sins] to mind.”⁶⁴

Covenant. The word “remember” in Isaiah 43:25 and Jeremiah 31:34 is connected to the Old Testament concept of covenant. A covenant is a promise made by

⁵⁸ Robert D. Jones, *Bad Memories: Getting Past Your Past* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004), 3.

⁵⁹ Jones, *Bad Memories*, 4.

⁶⁰ Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 12.

⁶¹ MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*, 189.

⁶² Broger, *Self-Confrontation*, 205.

⁶³ Broger, *Self-Confrontation*, 205.

⁶⁴ Broger, *Self-Confrontation*, 205.

God. In these passages, God is promising to not remember the sins of his people.⁶⁵ When God makes a covenant promise, he promises not to treat a person as their sins deserve.⁶⁶ He also promises to cancel debt and remove guilt.⁶⁷ In addition, God promises to never bring up a person's guilt again or use it against a person.⁶⁸

God the Promise Keeper

Since it is impossible for God in his Person to forget sins, every sinful word and act committed against God will need to be punished.⁶⁹ Without God's divine intervention, man would be without hope. Romans 5:8 demonstrates hope for the sinner: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." The Scriptures express that the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23); yet, Christ died and he was without sin.⁷⁰ Consequently, 2 Corinthians 5:21 expresses the purpose of the sinless Christ dying for the church: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Jesus' substitutionary and propitiatory death was accomplished on behalf of God's elect. DeMoss says that Jesus' death "was God's way of dealing with what we had done to him in the Bible."⁷¹ The Bible says that, because of Christ, God has not counted a Christian's sins against him (2 Cor 5:19). On the contrary, God chooses to remember the sinner's sins no more (Heb 10:17). God has "forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood

⁶⁵ Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 12.

⁶⁶ Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 12.

⁶⁷ Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 12.

⁶⁸ Alfred Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 152.

⁶⁹ Eccl 12:14; Matt 12:36-37; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Pet 4:17

⁷⁰ 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 4:4-5; Luke 23:4, 14, 22, 47; John 8:46; Heb 4:15; Heb 7:26; 1 Pet 1:19, 2:22-24, 3:18; Rev 5:2-10

⁷¹ DeMoss, *Choosing Forgiveness*, 85.

against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross” (Col 2:13-14). Thus, all the promises of God find their “‘yes’ in Christ” (2 Cor 1:20).

God is the promise keeper. He chose to sacrifice his Son and remove the sins of his people “far as the east is from the west” (Ps 103:12). God decided not to hold sin against his church because Jesus paid the penalty for their sins. Thus, sinners are washed with the blood of Christ (Rom 3:23-25; Eph 1:7; Heb 10:19-22; 1 John 1:7). Furthermore, Christians are thereby acquitted and, because of Christ, God will never hold their sins against them.⁷² Jesus’ sacrificial death enabled God to remain faithful to his Person. God does not forget or erase sins, he simply remembers that he placed the punishment on his Son. God the Father accepted the finished work of Christ (John 19:30). Consequently then, the past, present, and future sins of a Christian are remembered by God; however, they are remembered in such a way that they have been released by God because of Jesus’ finished work on the cross in their behalf.

The Practicalities

When suffering saints move toward their offender in transactional forgiveness, they need to abide by the same principle in Ephesians 4:32: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.” New creations in Christ, because of the Holy Spirit residing in them, have the ability to emulate the same forgiveness they received from God. To forgive others as God in Christ has forgiven, Christians must remember to apply the following principles to their own life about transactional forgiveness.

⁷² Although Christians are saved from the judgment before the Great White Throne (Rev 20:11-15), their communion and fellowship with God can be hindered after their salvation if they do not confess their sins to God and ask for forgiveness when they sin (1 John 1:9). In progressive sanctification God still holds his children responsible for maintaining fellowship with him.

Forgiveness is the Christian's duty. First, Christians must remember that forgiveness is their duty. Jesus understood that forgiveness would be difficult to practice among one another. Maybe this is why he commands Christians to forgive (Luke 17:4, 10). In Luke 17:5 the disciples responded to Jesus' command to forgive their offenders by asking their Lord to increase their faith. After Jesus encouraged his disciples by teaching them about possessing faith like a mustard seed (Luke 17:6), he reiterated that it was the duty of his followers to do everything he commanded (Lk 17:10).⁷³ Thus, forgiveness to the repenting brother is, in actuality, a matter of obedience to Jesus.⁷⁴

Forgiveness involves a three-fold promise. Second, Christians must remember that forgiveness involves a three-fold promise. Unworthy servants perform their duty by applying the three-fold promise involved with forgiveness. First, the Christian promises not to bring up the offender's sin to himself.⁷⁵ In other words, he chooses not to dwell upon the offender's sin continuously in his mind. Rather, he promises to release the sin to God. Second, the Christian promises not to talk about the offender's sin to others.⁷⁶ Choosing to not dwell upon the sins of others involves heeding the counsel of James 3:1-12 by avoiding slandering, cursing, and gossiping to others about the situation. Third, the Christian promises not to bring up the offender's sin against him.⁷⁷

⁷³ The immediate context refers to granting forgiveness to the repenting offender. This forgiveness would need to be granted every time the offender repented. This is why the disciples asked for more faith in Luke 17:5.

⁷⁴ Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 24.

⁷⁵ Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor*, 154.

⁷⁶ There may be times when the sufferer must talk to others about the sin. However, talking to others about the offender's sin is for the purpose of peacemaking. The goal for talking to another person about a difficult situation is always reconciliation (Matt 18:15-17).

⁷⁷ Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor*, 154.

Forgiveness is an event and a process. Third, Christians must keep in mind that forgiveness is an event and a process. Unworthy servants also fulfill their duty by understanding what Jesus teaches in Mark 11:25: “And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” The verb utilized for “forgive” in Mark 11:25 demonstrates the reality that forgiveness is both an event and a process. Alfred Poirier articulates the process of forgiveness: “We forgive someone and then continue to forgive. We promise and then continue to keep our promise. In other words, we forgive as God has forgiven us in Christ.”⁷⁸

Since Christians are part of the offspring of Eve (Gen 3:16) and they battle against the world, their own flesh, and the devil (1 John 2:16, 2 Cor 4:4), they need to be wise in the way they understand the dynamics of forgiveness. Chris Brauns expresses, “One of Satan’s favorite tactics is to use unresolved issues.”⁷⁹ Paul revealed an unresolved issue in his own life in 2 Corinthians 10:1-6. Paul approached his offenders with the meekness and gentleness of Christ (2 Cor 10:1). He identified his unreconciled relationships as a spiritual war (2 Cor 10:3-4) and then demonstrated the importance of “taking every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience” (2 Cor 10:5-6). Thus, Paul recognized the importance of understanding forgiveness as an event and a process. Paul acknowledged that God not only held him responsible for how he would respond to his situation, but God also provided the means by which he could completely obey Christ. By taking his thoughts captive and doing whatever it took to mortify his own sin, Paul made the decision to obey Christ.

Taking thoughts captive and mortifying remaining sin is necessary to win in the battle of forgiving the offender. Consequently, obedience to Christ will be manifested

⁷⁸ Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor*, 155.

⁷⁹ Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness*, 170.

when the suffering Christian commits to carrying out the three-fold promises of forgiveness. These promises need to be applied again when a person's thoughts are lured away from these promises. If this is the case, then the Christian will need to keep on forgiving (Mark 11:25).

Forgiving Self

The third common misconception that may hinder attitudinal forgiveness involves the unbiblical idea of forgiving oneself. Since Genesis 3 there has been an emphasis on rejecting God and being self-autonomous. Satan introduced the age-old question to humanity: “Did God actually say” (Gen 3:1)? This reasoning is always demonic in its origin (2 Cor 11:13-14). In the nineteenth century, the church was bombarded with an emphasis on self, mainly from the self-esteem movement.⁸⁰ This movement, although secular in origin, was adapted by many Evangelicals. Rather than remaining faithful to the exegesis of Scripture, many in the church were doing eisegesis; they were bringing their own interpretive grid and agenda into the text of Scripture. Familiar passages such as the Great Commandment would now include more than an emphasis on loving God and one's neighbor as oneself. The self-esteem hermeneutic taught that the Great Commandment also teaches that the Christian needs to love himself.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 61.

⁸¹ Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 61. Although the hermeneutic of the self-esteem movement is unbiblical, there is a self-love that is biblical. For instance, Rich Thomson refers to four different kinds of love: selfish love, self-preserving love, self-respecting love, and soul-loving love. Thomson states,

In attempting to rid the body of Christ from the influence of human wisdom in this area, some have declared that a proper self-love is nowhere taught in the Bible. This is true, if one means that nowhere in Scripture is man commanded to love himself. It is not true however, if one means that the concept of a proper self-love—that is, self-respect or good self-esteem—is nowhere addressed in the Word of God. Indeed, it is addressed, but it is not specifically referred to as “self-love.” (Rich Thomson, *The Heart of Man and the Mental Disorders: How the Word of God is Sufficient* [Alief, TX: Biblical Counseling Ministries, 2012], 995)

The self-esteem movement emphasizes turning cognitions and affections toward oneself.⁸² In so doing, the teaching propagates that a person is self-actualized. Rick Thomas explains that this teaching “mandates a high view of herself.”⁸³ The self-esteem movement additionally calls people to admire themselves.⁸⁴

In *Psychology Today*, Shoba Sreenivasan and Linda Weinberger, professors of psychology at the University of Southern California, comment,

Self-forgiveness is a morally complex issue. There are examples of human cruelty (such as dictators who find pleasure in torturing innocent victims) for which it would be ethically impossible to promote a path of self-forgiveness. Generally, self-forgiveness should be directed toward good, decent people who have the ability to feel empathy. When they hurt others, they feel guilt and shame.⁸⁵

These professors have a secular view of anthropology. At least they admit to the complexity of forgiveness. It is interesting to observe that their understanding of man includes an exception to certain people who are beyond self-forgiveness. Saul would have been a person who was not good, decent, or empathetic, and consequently he was beyond self-forgiveness.⁸⁶

Admittedly, most Evangelical Christians differ in their view of anthropology. The problem that Christians have with the self-forgiveness teaching goes back to the historic question posed by the serpent in Genesis 3:1: “Did God actually say?” In other

⁸² Rick Thomas, “Love Me: The Hidden Agenda of Self-Esteem,” accessed February 20, 2019, <https://rickthomas.net/loving-me-the-hidden-agenda-of-self-esteem-2/>. Poirier adds to the discussion by making a similar comment: “Dominant voices in evangelicalism unwittingly encourage this very criticism by treating Christian forgiveness as a form of self-help therapy.” Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor*, 143.

⁸³ Thomas, “Love Me,” 4.

⁸⁴ Thomas, “Love Me,” 5.

⁸⁵ Shoba Sreenivasan and Linda E. Weinberger, “Forgiving Yourself: Transcend Your Anger at Yourself with Love and View Yourself with Empathy,” *Psychology Today*, April 15, 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/emotional-nourishment/201704/forgiving-forgivingyourself>.

⁸⁶ Concerning the same condition, according to Paul, the entire world would fit in this category (see Rom 3:10-12; Eph 2:1-3).

words, many in American culture understand what the secular self-esteem movement teaches because it has invaded every part of society. Discerning Christians, however, want to be good Bereans and adopt the biblical view on the matter (Acts 17:11).

The secular teaching derived from the self-esteem movement makes it difficult for some Christians to adapt a biblical view of forgiveness. Many Christians believe that Focus on the Family has maintained a good reputation in the Christian community as insightful Bereans. Yet, Focus on the Family has been influenced by the self-esteem movement. In an article written in response to a question asked by a concerned Christian relating to whether self-forgiveness is biblical, Focus on the Family replied,

We'd suggest that your "theological" objections to the idea of "self-forgiveness" may come down to nothing more than a question of semantics. You claim that there are no Scriptures anywhere in the Old or New Testaments that speak of "forgiving yourself." At the same time, you would probably agree that there are *many* passages referring to the sin of *unbelief*. Isn't it possible that these are just two different ways of saying the same thing?⁸⁷

Focus on the Family then provided a biblical example from Romans 8:1 and 2 Corinthians 5:17: "If you continue to condemn yourself after receiving the grace and forgiveness of Christ, isn't there a sense in which you are denying the faith and crucifying the Son of God afresh (Hebrews 6:6)? We think so."⁸⁸

The sin of unbelief and forgiving oneself do not mean the same thing. Therefore, it is not a matter of semantics. Forgiving oneself is unbiblical and is a hindrance to attitudinal forgiveness. A person is unable to forgive himself not because of a lack of belief, but because of his insufficient authority in himself and his inability to provide the blood sacrifice that God requires. A Christian can trust in Christ's authority and accept his blood sacrifice on his behalf through the discipline of confession. Thus, biblical

⁸⁷ Focus on the Family, "What the Bible Says about Forgiving Yourself," 2011, accessed January 30, 2019, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/family-q-and-a/faith/what-the-bible-says-about-forgiving-yourself>.

⁸⁸ Focus on the Family, "What the Bible Says."

confession and repentance are the only means God uses to alleviate the guilt that accompanies a self-forgiving person.

Three questions must be considered to arrive at a biblical answer to the question of whether it is right to seek or ask for self-forgiveness.

By Whose Authority?

The first question can be asked in this way: By whose authority is a person able to forgive himself? In Mark 2:1-12 Jesus alone not only has authority to physically heal a paralytic but he also possesses the authority in himself as God the Son to forgive sins. William Lane clarifies that Jesus' healing of the paralytic forced the first century audience to realize that his claim to forgive sins was legitimate.⁸⁹ The original audience understood the significance of both the physical and healing miracles. Lane continues, "The announcement and presentation of radical healing to a man in his entire person was a sign of the Kingdom of God drawn near."⁹⁰

When Jesus told the paralytic that his sins were forgiven, the Scribes questioned this in their heart and silently accused him of blasphemy (Mark 2:5-6). Then, as if they were connecting what they knew to be true about God's attributes and associating that with what Jesus said, they arrived at this conclusion: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7). Their concern was sensible and biblical. They were right to declare this biblical reality. Nevertheless, they were wrong at this point in Jesus' ministry by identifying Jesus as merely a man from Nazareth. Thus, the accusation in their heart in Mark 2 eventually culminated to a charge against Jesus that ultimately ended with his execution on a Roman cross (Mark 14:60-65).

⁸⁹ William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 98.

⁹⁰ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 99.

It was a serious matter for a mere human to claim to have the authority in himself to forgive sins.⁹¹ Yet, advocates of an unbiblical approach to self-forgiveness not only defend the view, but counsel others to the same. A careful and wise disciple of the Word of God will acknowledge that God has not actually said anything about forgiving oneself.⁹² Rather, God the Son holds this authority.

By Whose Blood?

The second question can be asked in this way: By whose blood is a person able to forgive himself? Jesus, as God the Son, not only had the sole authority to forgive sins, but as the Lamb of God he provided the necessary propitiatory sacrifice acceptable to God the Father. Rick Thomas clearly teaches that self-forgiveness should be easily confirmed as “a self-evident heresy that distorts the Gospel by adding to the forgiveness we receive from God alone, through Christ alone, based on the Bible alone.”⁹³ Belief in self-forgiveness is equivalent to adding to the blood sacrifice for sin required by God the Father. In the Exodus account the Israelites were told by God to place the blood of a lamb above their door post to avoid the death angel (Exod 12:7). What did God require? The Word of God gives specific instructions: “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old” (Exod 12:5). It would have been foolish to add to the blood sacrifice of the spotless lamb. However, this is what the issue of self-forgiveness entails; it involves adding a man-made condition to what God requires. This is heresy.⁹⁴

As a person continues to survey the Old Testament Scriptures, he will discover that the spotless lamb was a temporary sacrifice that served as a reminder to the Jews that

⁹¹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Greek New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 126.

⁹² DeMoss, *Choosing Forgiveness*, 113.

⁹³ Rick Thomas, “The Danger of Forgiving Yourself,” accessed February 20, 2019, <https://medium.com/rickthomasnet/the-danger-of-forgiving-yourself-96edee1e345d>.

⁹⁴ Thomas, “The Danger of Forgiving Yourself,” 2.

their sin required a blood sacrifice for atonement by God's chosen priests. Passover would not serve as the only reminder of the spotless lamb in the Old Testament. The entire sacrificial system consisting of tabernacles and temples would also help the Israelites remember God's way of utilizing the spotless lamb as the only way of reconciling his people to himself. Although glimpses of the spotless lamb are detected throughout the Old Testament, Isaiah 53 ultimately pulls back the curtains of the mysterious happenstance of the cross and highlights the mission of the suffering servant: "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth" (v. 7). Jesus became the Passover Lamb.

The New Testament personifies the spotless Lamb of God as Jesus of Nazarene. John the Baptist introduced Jesus at the beginning of his ministry as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus was the spotless lamb without blemish (1 Pet 2:23-24). Revelation 5:6 continues the theme of the Lamb of God in heaven: "And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." The Lamb of God is depicted as the only One worthy to open the scroll and break the seals (Rev 5:2). Further in Revelation, the Lamb of God is portrayed as standing with the 144,000 and they were worshipping him in all his glory (Rev 14:1-5). As revelation concludes, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is expounded in detail (Rev 19:6-10).

One can only be forgiven by the blood of the Lamb of God. Self-forgiveness entails adding to the spotless Lamb's blood. There is more at stake here than merely semantics. Teaching about self-forgiveness is a direct assault on the authority of God the Son and the blood sacrifice of the Lamb of God. If a person truly believes the teaching of self-forgiveness, then he might be either weak in his understanding of theology or he could believe in a different gospel (Gal 1:6-9).

By Whose Confession?

The third question that must be considered is this: By whose confession is a person able to forgive himself? A mere person does not have the authority in himself to forgive sins. His authority is insufficient. Moreover, people cannot pay the blood sacrifice that God requires for their sin. Yet, people are responsible to confess their sins to God. A person must comprehend the theological significance of Christ's authority as God the Son and also believe in his perfect sacrifice for their sins as God the Lamb. Understanding these truths is part of what it means to believe in the gospel.

Christ not only authoritatively forgave sin verbally, but he also volitionally provided the blood sacrifice. Sinners contribute nothing to forgiveness in these first two categories. However, a person can believe in someone outside himself for salvation—he can believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Sinners can be justified by faith because Jesus has the authority and provided the sacrifice required for reconciliation to occur between the sinner and God. As a result, confession is required of him by God. The sinner must confess his sins to God, and only then can he count on God's forgiveness.⁹⁵ Forgiveness of sins occurs when a person is born again to the living hope (1 Pet 1:3). When the sinner is born again, he becomes a child of God. His relationship to the Father is no longer a depraved rebel, but a redeemed sinner. The restored relationship is now parental.

First John identifies important aspects of a Christians parental relationship to the Father.⁹⁶ One of the key teachings in the book concerns confession: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Herein contains the corrective for forgiving oneself. Rather than pursuing self-forgiveness, one should instead come to God the Son to confess his sins

⁹⁵ Thomson, *The Heart of Man and the Mental Disorders*, 102.

⁹⁶ Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 30.

and have faith that the Lamb of God will cleanse that person of all unrighteousness. Confession of sin to Christ and not oneself is the only way to receive parental forgiveness. Conviction, guilt, and shame are actually forms of kindness from a loving heavenly Father.⁹⁷ This is because these emotions may be alleviated through Christ's authority and his blood sacrifice. Confession of sin to Jesus is the only condition the Father requires. Confession requires acknowledging one's sins before the faithful and just, authoritative, Lamb of God.⁹⁸ Part of acknowledging sin means that a person agrees with God that his sin is primarily against God (Ps 51:4). Sin can also be committed against others. In the cases where someone has sinned against another person, confession of sin to that individual should be made in addition to confessing sins to God. However, nowhere in the Bible does it teach that Christians sin against themselves.⁹⁹ Rather, the Christian confesses his sins to the One who has all authority and has also provided the blood sacrifice for sins. Moreover, Jesus is the high priest seated at the right hand of God interceding for his church. He is faithful and just to forgive sins and to cleanse his people from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Summary

Three hindrances to attitudinal forgiveness have been clearly specified in this chapter. Forgiving God, forgetting the sins of others, and forgiving oneself are unbiblical. Each of these solutions attack not only the gospel, but also the character of the Triune God. The consequence to believing in these lies equates to attitudinal forgiveness being hindered. In addition, communion with God will be hindered. Thus, this chapter sought to

⁹⁷ Thomas, "The Danger of Forgiving Yourself," 3.

⁹⁸ Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, 246.

⁹⁹ John MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 190.

provide the biblical corrective so that a suffering Christian may renew his rightful attitude toward his offender and also maintain fellowship with God.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING AND LEADING A FORGIVENESS SEMINAR

Introduction

The increased number of members seeking counseling from pastors at Open Door Community Church for issues related to forgiveness demonstrates the great need for a biblical forgiveness counseling curriculum and for a seminar to be developed. This project was designed and implemented to help address the growing need to provide solid biblical solutions for contemporary forgiveness issues.

This forgiveness seminar was specifically developed for the purpose of teaching members of ODCC how to build their lives upon Christ's teaching about attitudinal and transactional forgiveness. Second, the forgiveness seminar demonstrated the kind of attitude the suffering saint should maintain toward God and others. The curriculum was based on eight key topics which were developed to provide members at ODCC with the necessary knowledge and resources to build a strong biblical foundation on which to base their relationships with God and others (Matt 22:37-40).

Identifying Eight Key Topics (Week 1)

The first week of the project focused on gathering information through informal discussions with the BCDM, local pastors, small group leaders, and biblical counselors regarding potential topics they would like included in a forgiveness seminar curriculum. The consensus of these informal conversations was that most counselees have been influenced by secular teaching from American culture. As a result, issues related to forgiveness are primarily understood through the lens of secular teaching versus forgiveness from a theological and exegetical perspective.

Thus, it became apparent that these individuals preferred that a theological foundation for forgiveness be established. Only after a theological foundation for forgiveness was determined could contemporary issues related to forgiveness be biblically discerned. Eight topics were identified to include in the teaching curriculum. The first five sessions consisted of five passages from the synoptic gospels. These passages teach that suffering saints must cultivate an attitude of forgiveness toward others. The first three sessions describe the kind of attitude needed in relation to motivations and the kind of worship one expresses toward God. Sessions 4 and 5 correspond to a suffering saint's attitude of both an openness to forgive others and attitude of faith in God's resources if reconciliation is not possible. Part 1 of the curriculum involved theological foundations of attitudinal forgiveness.

1. A Theological Model for Attitudinal Forgiveness (Matt 7:24-27).
2. Christ-Centered Motivations (Matt 6:9-15).
3. Christ-Centered Attitude of Worship (Mark 11:25).
4. Christ-Centered Attitude of Reconciliation (Luke 17:1-3).
5. Christ-Centered Attitude of Faith in God's Provision (Matt 18:15-17).

To fortify Christ's teaching in the synoptic gospels, Christians must learn to practice discernment in the midst of unbiblical forgiveness issues. The second part of the seminar focused on three unbiblical teachings that may hinder attitudinal forgiveness from taking place. These topics were chosen according to a Great Commandment orientation.¹

6. The Error of Forgiving God.
7. The Error of Forgetting the Sins of Others.
8. The Error of Forgiving Yourself.

¹ Great Commandment orientation pertains to the order of emphasis in the Great Commandment (Matt 22:37-40). Thus, session 6 focused on the suffering saint's relationship to God, session 7 involved the suffering saint's relationship to others, and session 8 concerned the suffering saint's relationship to himself.

During the first week, the BCDM and pastors decided to perform a Counseling and Discipleship Training style conference.² The pastors and BCDM determined to host an eight-hour seminar. The weekend seminar began on a Friday at 6:00 p.m. and concluded on Saturday afternoon at 4:30 p.m.³ The benefit of implementing a seminar over one weekend was the ability for members of ODCC to commit to attending the entire seminar. For most ODCC members, the concept of attending one weekend compared to undertaking a Sunday school or small group format seemed far more complicated and would be difficult with either working schedules or ministry commitments. Furthermore, arrangement would need to be made for participants who had children.

The BCDM and pastors determined the location for the seminar in the first week. The pastors and BCDM decided that the seminar would take place at ODCC. Each session was conducted in classroom 1. PowerPoint was made available on a seventy-inch flat-screen television. Tables were set up so participants could write in the Forgiveness Seminar Participant's Manual.⁴ Tables were also utilized for attendees to place their snacks, beverages, and lunch on Saturday. The kitchen served as the place for volunteers to prepare these refreshments, appetizers, and lunch on Saturday. Participants took breaks in the church foyer located outside the classroom. The foyer provided an opportunity for fellowship, snacks, and beverages. The breaks also gave couples with children an occasion to check on their children in the nursery or youth room.

² Counseling and Discipleship Training is an equipping ministry of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC) for biblical counselors who are interested in counseling and discipleship training. The training consists of thirty hours of training. This training has both foundation tracks and advanced tracks. It usually includes thirty hours of training over three weekends (ten hours each weekend). My seminar followed the same format but consisted of eight hours of training over one weekend.

³ See appendix 5.

⁴ See appendix 5.

Curriculum Development (Weeks 2-5)

I developed the lesson plans and curriculum for the forgiveness seminar for each of the eight topics in weeks 2 through 5. Furthermore, I decided to include material from my Theology of Counseling class for session 1.⁵ Sessions 2 through 5 incorporated material from chapter 2 of this project. Sessions 6 through 8 comprised of the content from chapter 3 of this project.

In developing the forgiveness seminar, one consideration I tried to consider was individual learning styles. I understood that eight hours of teaching in the evening, morning, and afternoon could become wearisome. For this reason, I decided to dedicate forty-five minutes to each session. Sessions included lectures, PowerPoint, question and answers, and commercial breaks.⁶ Most sessions integrated fifteen minutes of lecture with a three-minute commercial break. On some occasions I allowed for question and answer time. In conversating with the participants after the seminar I received positive feedback for keeping this format for future seminars. The seminar was also recorded, and copies of the recording and curriculum were made available to people who could not attend the weekend seminar.

Each session began with a specific objective followed by the key passage to be considered. Session outlines were obtained primarily from my chapters 2 through 3 of this project. PowerPoint slides incorporated material from Paul Tripp, Jeremy Pierre, and Robert Jones.⁷ Most of the sessions ended with a summary PowerPoint, which was my

⁵ The concepts for session 1 were acquired from a class that I developed entitled, “BC 509 Theology of Counseling.” See appendix 5, session 1.

⁶ I coined this term from Nicholas Ellen. A commercial break involves giving the participants 2-3 minutes to talk among themselves about what they are learning. I ask them to discuss their hardest challenges and biggest takeaways from the lecture after each 15-20-minute teaching on a teaching point.

⁷ Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 250; Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 17; Robert Jones, “Two-Rejection Reality Chart” (classroom lecture notes, 80511—*Introduction to Biblical Counseling*,

attempt to capture the big picture ideas from the session. Some key resources for further study were also included in the back of the Forgiveness Seminar Participant's Manual.⁸

Professional Review of Curriculum (Weeks 6 and 7)

At the beginning of week 6, I emailed two professors from Shasta Bible College and Graduate School and one pastor from First Baptist Weaverville. I provided both of the professors and pastor with the following materials for the first four sessions:

1. Forgiveness Seminar Leader's Manual
2. Copies of chapter 2 of this project
3. PowerPoint presentations
4. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric including an agreement to participate⁹

After the professional review team confirmed that they received my email, I scheduled to meet with the two professors at Shasta Bible College and Graduate School. Further, I scheduled a phone meeting with the pastor from First Baptist Weaverville. I explained the project in detail as well as the project goals. I then took them each through the Forgiveness Seminar Leader's Manual expressing how the eight sessions were to be utilized in support of fulfilling each of the project goals. I also took time to demonstrate how to work through my PowerPoint presentation. The professional review team was given the opportunity to ask questions or express concerns about the project.

Each meeting went well, with each professor and pastor agreeing to review the Forgiveness Seminar Leader's Manual and complete the Curriculum Evaluation Rubric and have the first four sessions ready for pickup within one week. During that week, I continued to work on sessions 5 through 8 of the curriculum. I also created a flyer, poster,

electronic copy, used by permission), 33. Robert Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 66.

⁸ See appendix 5.

⁹ See appendix 2.

and PowerPoint to promote the Forgiveness Seminar within ODCC. In addition to preparing these promotional materials, I set up a sign-up table in the foyer and made an announcement during the Sunday morning church service.

Curriculum Evaluation Rubrics Reviewed, Curriculum Changes, and Pre-Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Assessments Collected (Weeks 8-10)

During week 8, I considered the completed evaluations of sessions 1 through 4.¹⁰ Written comments by the expert panel were also included in the completed rubrics for each session. The feedback was positive, and the reviewers did not have any marks for “insufficient” or “requires attention.” Each session rubric displayed support for the content of the Forgiveness Seminar. After examining the completed rubrics, I met individually with the pastor and professors to talk about their perceptions and ideas more closely. The expert panel demonstrated their support for the content and application of the first four sessions. Furthermore, each noted the importance of my development of building a theological foundation as it relates to forgiveness. I also utilized this time with the panel to deliver the following materials for the last four sessions:

1. Forgiveness Seminar Leader’s Manual
2. Copies of chapter 3 of this project
3. PowerPoint presentations
4. Curriculum Evaluation Rubrics

The expert panel committed to completing the Curriculum Evaluation Rubric for sessions 5 through 8 in one week.

During week 9, I made changes to sessions 1-4 to reflect the comments of the expert panel. In the course of this same week, I retrieved the completed session evaluation rubrics completed by the panel.¹¹ Written comments from each professor and pastor were

¹⁰ The results were recorded and are included in appendix 2.

¹¹ The results were recorded and included in appendix 2.

also included in the completed rubric. The feedback was nearly the same as sessions 1-4. The panel provided positive comments concerning the relevance of the topics I selected. They also expressed their appreciation of taking the time to build a theological foundation before addressing contemporary forgiveness issues. I expressed my gratitude to each panel participant.

Week 9 also involved collecting the Pre-Forgiveness Seminar Assessments from the participants that signed up for the event. ODCC's secretary called the participants and collected 19 assessments. An Agreement to Participate form was also included with these assessments. These assessments were collected, placed in an envelope, and stored in a file in my office.

During week 10, I made changes to sessions 5-8 to reflect the comments of the expert panel. Within this same week, I identified a printing company to print copies of the Forgiveness Seminar Participant's Manual.

Final Arrangements (Weeks 11 and 12)

Weeks 11 and 12 were spent finalizing details relating to the Forgiveness Seminar. During week 10, I made my final edits to the Forgiveness Seminar Participant's Manual. After the final revisions were made, I delivered a digital PDF version to Budget Printing and arrangements were made to make thirty manuals. In the middle of week 11, I edited and finalized my PowerPoint presentations.¹² Toward the end of the week, I made plans with Chipotle for lunch during the seminar. I contacted two participants and clarified their expectations relating to dietary restrictions. Special accommodations were made to meet their individual needs.

¹² There were two different PowerPoint presentations. One presentation included the slides for sessions 1 through 5—Theological Foundations for Attitudinal Forgiveness. The other PowerPoint presentation was for sessions 6 through 8—Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness.

Many goals were accomplished in the course of week 12. First, several meetings were held throughout the week. I met with the nursery and youth volunteers so they would be aware of their expectations.¹³ In addition to meeting with the nursery and youth volunteers, I also met with the kitchen crew. I answered their questions and made sure that they had everything they would need for the conference. One volunteer from the kitchen crew offered to have all the snacks, beverages, and lunch available for the seminar. This was a huge relief for me because his efforts allowed me to focus on the teaching involved with the seminar. I also met with the volunteers who would be responsible for setting up and cleaning up the event. I discussed the details of seating, audio and visual, arranging the youth, nursery, foyer, and kitchen. Moreover, I met with the church secretary and arranged times later in the week where she could email and phone the participants to remind them about the Forgiveness Seminar. Provisions were also made for an announcement to be made on Sunday morning during the church service. Lastly, I met with the worship pastor at ODCC. I informed him about the content and goals of the seminar. The worship pastor arranged songs of worship according to the theme of forgiveness. He also employed his own PowerPoint.

After all of these arrangements were fulfilled, I spent the remainder of the week preparing for teaching the eight sessions. I went over the Forgiveness Seminar Participant's Manual along with my PowerPoint presentation to become more familiar with the presentation. Furthermore, I added necessary commercial breaks between major teaching points.

¹³ Since these volunteers already serve the youth and children at ODCC, then it was unnecessary to secure background checks for the seminar. It is a mandatory requirement at ODCC to have a background check if a person wishes to serve in youth or children's ministries.

Forgiveness Seminar (Week 13)

The Forgiveness Seminar took place during week 13. A day before the seminar began, a married couple withdrew from the event. However, the couple donated their tickets to another married couple from ODCC. I removed the original couple's Pre-Forgiveness Seminar Assessments so there would be no confusion when I recorded the results of the Pre- and Post-Forgiveness Seminar Assessments after the seminar. I also had a woman approach me after session 1 to tell me that she did not feel comfortable participating in the assessments. She told me that she has struggled applying forgiveness principles to a man who murdered her son. After consoling her, I encouraged her to stay for the seminar and I also expressed that it was not mandatory for her to participate in the assessments. Furthermore, I told her that she was welcome to participate in the discussions with others, but I made it clear that she should not participate in discussions where she is not comfortable. Additionally, I made myself and a female counselor available for counseling if she wanted to pursue that ministry. A total of thirty ODCC members attended the seminar and eighteen of those members completed both the Pre and Post-Forgiveness Seminar Assessments.¹⁴

The seminar went according to schedule and I received positive feedback from the participants. The woman who wanted to leave because of her son's murder expressed her gratitude toward me for both the clarity of my teaching and the practicality of the content. She told me that God wanted her at the seminar.

The following sessions were taught at the Forgiveness Seminar:

Session 1: A Theological Model for Attitudinal Forgiveness

In my evaluation of the eight topics chose for the Forgiveness Seminar, I

¹⁴ See appendix 1 and appendix 3.

wanted to intensify Heath Lambert's idea that "counseling is, by definition, theological."¹⁵ In sessions 2-5 I attempted to demonstrate this concept by affirming that if anyone is attempting to understand forgiveness and all of the contemporary counseling issues relating to forgiveness, then his endeavors to understand these topics must be seen primarily through the lens of theology. These endeavors are not psychological pursuits. Since this was my goal, the most logical place to begin session 1 was to provide an interpretive lens by which participants could understand forgiveness. Concepts from session 1 were big picture realities. Although I did not include this teaching in my project, I wanted to send a message that the only authority for any counseling issue has to begin and end with the authoritative Word of God. Members of ODCC needed to understand that God calls them to build their lives upon the words of Christ (Matt 7:24-27).

I employed the parable of the two builders in Matthew 7:24-27 to illustrate a theological model for forgiveness.¹⁶ Emphasis was placed upon building one's life upon the words of Christ. I correlated the relevance of building one's life upon the words of Christ to the topic of forgiveness. I told the group that Matthew 7:24-27 would be a theological model for forgiveness. I challenged the group to be willing, over the course of eight sessions, to take every thought captive to the Word of God (2 Cor 10:4-5).

Participants also learned about the connection between the two builders (Matt 7:24-27). I pointed out that there are only two builders in the passage. The wise man built his house on "these words of mine" (Matt 7:26). The result of building one's life upon the words of Christ will be a life that will not fall apart in the midst of whatever situation.¹⁷

¹⁵ Heath Lambert, *Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 11.

¹⁶ The concepts for session 1 were acquired from a class that I developed entitled, "BC 509 Theology of Counseling." See appendix 5, session 1.

¹⁷ I taught the group that the primary meaning derived from the context indicates salvation (Matt 7:21-23). However, we would be using the framework in Matt 7:24-27 to emphasize progressive sanctification as it relates to the Suffering Saint and the topic of forgiveness.

The foolish builder built his house on the sand. As a result, he subjects himself to the triple-threat of rain, floods, and winds. I spent time in this section giving the participants a brief introductory understanding of a theology of suffering. The consequences of the foolish builder are eternal judgment and living habitually according to the flesh.

Participants learned that Jesus is speaking to everyone in the passage. I highlighted the phrase “these words of mine” and attempted to communicate that this phrase was the emphasis of the passage. Next, I taught them that everyone is a builder and there are only two ways to build their lives. Additionally, I made the connection to the passage by conveying that discipleship involves not only hearing and believing, but also believing and doing. I admonished the group that their lives should not be built upon visions, ceremonies, experiences, feelings, miracles, philosophies, psychologies, because these ideas are associated with the man who builds his life upon the sand (Matt 7:26-27).

After it was clear that we would be building our foundation upon the “words of Christ,” I spent the rest of the session defining attitudinal forgiveness. I utilized Jeremy Pierre’s “Dynamic Heart Functions” illustration.¹⁸ Pierre’s model is a graphic illustration of what goes on in the heart of man. During this time, I also identified that the focus of the seminar would relate to the suffering saint’s responsibilities as related to both attitudinal and transactional forgiveness.

At the end of session 1, the group took a ten-minute break.

Session 2: Christ-Centered Motivations

Sessions 2-5 included four passages from the synoptic gospels. These passages were selected to teach that suffering saints must cultivate both an attitude of forgiveness and an openness to forgive others. The first two passages describe the kind of attitude needed in relation to motivations and the kind of worship one expresses toward God. The passages in sessions 4 and 5 corresponded to a suffering saint’s attitude of both an

¹⁸ Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart*, 17.

openness to forgive others and an attitude of faith in God's resources if reconciliation is not possible.

The primary focus of session 2 was on motivations for forgiving a sinning saint from the heart (Matt 6:9-15). Session 2 was developed to teach each participant how the Lord's Prayer identifies four Christ-centered motivations for the Suffering Saint.¹⁹ My intention for this section was to demonstrate that motivations are multi-motivational.²⁰ Another objective I had for this session was to help participants utilize three diagnostic questions to ask either in the midst of a temptation or as the suffering saint thought about their past interactions with a sinning saint.²¹

At the end of session 2, there was a summary of the four Christ-centered motivations. I employed fifteen minutes toward question and answer time. After question and answer time, the participants took a ten-minute break.

Session 3: Christ-Centered Attitude of Worship

Session 3 was developed to teach participants the kind of attitude a suffering saint should maintain toward a sinning saint as he communes with his heavenly Father. The purpose was for participants, after understanding the context, circumstances,

¹⁹ The four motivations for Christ-centered forgiveness involved the following: (1) I will forgive the sinning saint from my heart for God's glory (Matt 6:9-10), (2) I will forgive the sinning saint from my heart because God is my Heavenly Father, (3) I will forgive the sinning saint from my heart because I need God's forgiveness, (4) I will forgive the sinning saint from my heart because I need to be forgiven by others.

²⁰ In other words, the Bible moves beyond simply being motivated for example by the love of Christ (2 Cor 5:14). Instead, there are multiple motivations expressed throughout the Scripture. I was hoping to permeate this point by drawing out four motivations from the Lord's prayer.

²¹ These questions were derived from personal application of Matt 6:9-10: (1) Am I living for the Father's name or my own, (2) Am I living for God's kingdom or my own? (3) Am I living for God's will or my own?

command, and conditions of the suffering saint in Mark 11:25, to be willing to honor God with their commitments put forth by way of application.²²

Emphasis was placed on the following statement: suffering saints must be willing to forgive their offender from their heart because an unwilling attitude distorts worship and breaches communion with God. After this thirty-five-minute teaching, I provided a five-minute commercial break for participants to discuss my teaching from Mark 11:25.

After the commercial break, we discussed two illustrations. I entitled the first illustration “Appropriate Alignment of the Worshipper.” I created this illustration to convey the idea that forgiveness problems are indeed worship problems. God does not hold a suffering saint accountable for forgiving a person that has sinned against him unless the sinning saint repents of his sin (Luke 17:3). God does, however, hold a suffering saint accountable to unconditionally love the sinning saint and if the suffering saint refuses to unconditionally love the sinning saint, then the worshipper will be out of alignment with God in his own attitude.

The second illustration that I implemented into my teaching for this session was Paul Tripp’s tool entitled “Circle of Responsibility.”²³ This tool demonstrates the importance of staying in one’s own lane in regard to forgiveness issues. Thus, I expressed that attitudinal forgiveness is located in the circle of responsibility, whereas transactional forgiveness is placed in the circle of concern. I emphasized that although the suffering

²² The four commitments of the suffering saint were the following: (1) I will commit the sinner and his offenses against me to God, (2) I will commit to guarding my own heart against sinful emotions, (3) I will commit myself to God, and (4) I will be committed to transactional forgiveness. The first three commitments represent principles of attitudinal forgiveness. The fourth commitment, because I am focusing on the suffering saint, has to do with maintaining a willingness to forgive the sinning saint if he repents. If the sinning saint repents, then the suffering saint is responsible to forgive. After repentance and forgiveness takes place, the suffering saint is commanded to forgive. Forgiveness is a promise made by the suffering saint to never talk about the sin to himself, others, or use the sin against the sinning saint in the future.

²³ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 250.

saint cannot fix the sinning Saint, God does expect the sufferer to maintain an attitude of forgiveness as the sufferer communes with God in prayer. I concluded session 3 with four application points that summarized the session content. I concluded with prayer and the participants were dismissed to go home.

Session 4: Christ-Centered Attitude of Reconciliation

I addressed the most understood aspect of what God requires of the suffering saint as he approaches a sinning saint for the purpose of transactional forgiveness. In other words, after a person's worship is realigned with God, how should a suffering saint approach his offender? Luke 17:1-3 teaches the principles involved in transactional forgiveness. One of the objectives for this session was to capture the concepts of transactional forgiveness through the perspective of the suffering saint.²⁴ Some of the discussion time in session 4 focused on the table I created that represents how Jesus' teaching in Luke 17:3 connected to the concepts of both attitudinal forgiveness and transactional forgiveness. I used the acronym "I SURF" to make my point.²⁵

Participants also learned how to associate the principles in Luke 17:3 to the Circle of Responsibility Chart. In addition to this chart, I also presented Robert Jones "Two-Reality Rejection Chart."²⁶ Participants were taught the importance of the unseen reality controlling one's perspective over the seen reality.

²⁴ The definition I used for *transactional forgiveness* was my attempt to capture the emphasis of the suffering saint in the forgiveness seminar: A conditional response whereby the suffering saint commits to forgive the repentant sinning saint by choosing not to dwell on his sin, or to hold his sin against him, and not to gossip about the sinning saint's sin to others.

²⁵ "I SURF" is an acronym I developed for the principles put for by Jesus in Luke 17:3. "I" represents the phrase, "pay attention to yourselves." "S" equates to sin: "if your brother sins." "U" represents understand: "rebuke him." Jesus is commanding his disciples to tentatively rebuke the sinner. Tentative carries with it the idea of approaching the sinning saint in an understandable way. "R" means repent: "if he repents." "F" identifies the suffering saint's responsibility to forgive: "forgive him."

²⁶ Jones, "Two-Rejection Reality Chart," 33.

Participants discovered the importance of principles for rebuking a sinning saint in an understanding way. I also took five minutes to teach the class what the responsibility of the sinning saint involves for transactional forgiveness to occur. The participants also learned what happens when a sinning saint is not willing to repent. I emphasized the importance of the suffering saint remaining willing to transact forgiveness with the sinning saint if the conditions are met by the sinning saint. Further, I explained the meaning of Jesus' command to forgive the sinning saint (Luke 17:3-4). The participants also learned the three promises that need to be upheld when the suffering saint commits to transacting forgiveness with his offenders.²⁷ Lastly, I taught the participants what happens if the suffering saint is not willing to forgive.

I concluded this session with a graphic that I created that captures the concepts discussed in this session. I left about ten minutes for questions and answers with the group. After question and answer time I prayed and then dismissed the group for a ten-minute break.

Session 5: Christ-Centered Attitude of Faith in God's Provision

The objective of session 5 was to teach participants what should happen if the sinning saint refuses to participate in transactional forgiveness with a suffering saint. Focus was placed on the entire context of Matthew 18:15-20. Participants learned that great caution and care should be considered both before and during the process of church discipline. I utilized a graphic that I created to illustrate what I called the Reconciliation Sandwich. I attempted to draw out the importance of the surrounding passages. On the one side is Matthew 18:10-14, which illustrates the parable of the lost sheep. On the other side of the church discipline passage is Matthew 18:21-31, which describes the parable of

²⁷ The suffering saint three-fold promise includes the following promises: (1) I promise not to dwell upon the sinning saint's sin to myself, (2) I promise that I will not use the sinning saint's sin against him, and (3) I promise that I will not slander the sinning saint in my conversations with others.

the unforgiving servant. In each parable Jesus is teaching his disciples the importance of reconciliation. I wanted to emphasize the context even further in Matthew 18:1-9. Jesus accentuates the importance of caring for his disciples. These teachings cannot be divorced from Matthew 18:15-17 where the focus is switched to the disciple who has been sinned against.

Participants were then taught a three-fold game-plan for what the suffering saint should do when the sinning saint refuses to confess and repentant of his sins: (1) personally confront the sinning saint, (2) bring peacemakers into the ministry of confrontation, and (3) call for public confrontation. This teaching involved a great deal of content and there was no time for commercial breaks or interaction with the material. Nonetheless, I tried to keep their attention by including tables and graphic illustrations to keep them from becoming weary.

After session 5, I gave the group a much-needed break.

Session 6: Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness Part 1—Forgiving God

After lunch, the sessions transitioned to hindrances to attitudinal and transactional forgiveness from a suffering saint's perspective. Many participants were looking forward to this part of the teaching curriculum all along. To fortify Christ's teaching on attitudinal and transactional forgiveness, participants must learn to practice discernment in the midst of unbiblical forgiveness issues. Sessions 6-8 focused on three unbiblical teachings that, if believed, hinder forgiveness from taking place. In addition to identifying these hindrances, I provided biblical teaching as it relates to these issues of forgiveness.

The objection of session 6 was for couples to learn how unbiblical it is for a suffering saint to arrive at the conclusion that he needs to forgive God. Without downplaying a person's situation, I was careful to demonstrate what the real problem is when a person comes to a place where he feels he is justified to forgive God. I stressed

that forgiving God is the byproduct of dealing with anger with a lack of love toward God and others. I included my own graphic that represents what is really going on in the heart of man as he responds to the heat of life at the point of choice. I underscored the importance of this decision.²⁸

Participants were also taught that forgiving God is unnecessary because it is an affront to God. The suffering saint is never God. In fact, when the suffering saint concludes that he needs to forgive God, then it is at this point that he becomes the sinning saint. A sinning saint, at this point, is actually under God's judgment until he repents of his sin. I illustrated this by explaining Robert Jones' "Throne-Staircase Diagram."²⁹

Participants learned that forgiving God is unnecessary because of God's attributes. It is actually blasphemy to accuse God of sinning because God is holy and blameless. I emphasized the importance of knowing God as sovereign, wise, and loving.³⁰ Participants were also taught that forgiving God is unnecessary because of the biblical alternative. I spent the rest of the session articulating the meaning and application of biblical lamenting. One idea that I attempted to highlight during this teaching involved the believer's responsibility to revere God. The suffering saint should always express his grief to God in a reverent manner.

After session 6, I gave the group a break.

²⁸ The person who responds to his situation with a lack of love might say, "I'm angry at God." The by-product of this unloving response will produce guilt in his immaterial soul: "I feel awful." This guilt, in turn, leads to fear: "I am afraid of God." This fearful response, lastly, leads to fleeing: "I need to forgive God."

²⁹ Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 66.

³⁰ These attributes are expressed further in Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 18.

Session 7: Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness Part 2—Forgetting the Sins of Others

The objective of session 7 was to teach participants about the unbiblical idea of forgetting the sins of others. I took a moment in this session to review the Great Commandment orientation of the current topic. Thus, I expressed that we would consider another hindrance that, if believed, would prevent transactional forgiveness from taking place.

The focus of this session was teaching participants a biblical view of one's past. I used Steve Viars' teaching relating to both correct and incorrect ways to look at one's past.³¹ I included a section on how the past can serve the saint. In addition to this teaching, I also articulated the meaning of both Isaiah 43:24 and Jeremiah 31:34. I included another chart that differentiated between the words *forget* and *remember*. Jay Adams helped me in my own understanding of these concepts.³²

The rest of the time in this session was dedicated to teaching the participants about the concepts of covenant, God as the promise keeper, and considering the practicalities of these concepts. I concluded by emphasizing the importance of remembering that forgiveness is the duty of servants of Jesus (Luke 17:1-6, 10). Participants also learned that suffering saints need to remember that forgiveness is both an event and a process (Mark 11:25; 2 Cor 10:1-6).

After I concluded the session with prayer, participants were dismissed for a ten-minute break.

³¹ Steve Viars, *Putting Your Past in Its Place* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2011), 15-19.

³² Jay Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving: Learning to Forgive One Another* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Calvary Press, 1994), 56-58.

Session 8: Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness Part 3—Forgiving Yourself

The last session consisted of the unbiblical teaching of forgiving yourself. Participants were most confused about this topic. I was aware of the confusion because most people that completed the Pre-Forgiveness Seminar Survey Assessment expressed their viewpoint that forgiving oneself is necessary and should be included in the process of reconciliation. Knowing this, I wanted to teach for forty minutes and leave twenty minutes for question and answer time.

The objective of this lesson was to teach the participants the ABC's of forgiving oneself. The "A" equates to *authority*. The suffering saint must ask himself, by whose authority is he able to forgive himself? The passage considered was Mark 2:1-12. I emphasized the importance of the question that was derived from the hearts of the Scribes: "Who can forgive sins but God alone" (Mark 2:7)? We also contemplated Jesus' answer in Mark 2:10-11: "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." The underlying point is that Jesus has authority to forgive sins because he is the God-man. The "B" represents *blood*. The suffering saint must answer the question: whose blood satisfies the wrath of God the Father for the forgiveness of sins? The class considered Exodus 12 for this point and focused on the Lamb of God. Participants learned that not only does Jesus as the God-man have full authority to forgive sins, but Jesus as the Lamb of God provides the necessary sacrifice that satisfies the Father. The "C" depicts the word *confession*. Herein lies the biblical corrective to forgiving oneself. Confessing sin to the Son of God and Lamb of God is the only means God uses to reconcile the sinner in salvation and to continue to cleanse the saint in his on-going battle with sin (1 John 1:9). I talked about the acronym "D" for the rest of my teaching time in this session. "D" represents *diagnosis*. In other words, what is the real problem? For this teaching I

highlighted the principles I obtained from Robert Jones.³³ I concluded the session with twenty minutes for questions and answers from the participants.

Sessions End

At the end of the seminar the same participants that completed the Pre-Forgiveness Seminar Assessment were asked to complete the Post-Forgiveness Seminar Assessment. It took nearly twenty minutes for the Post-Forgiveness Assessment to be completed. The seminar concluded with a worship song and prayer. I thanked each participant for their own commitment to be involved in the seminar.

Processing Data (Weeks 14 and 15)

Weeks 14 and 15 were spent processing data obtained from the Pre- and Post-Forgiveness Seminar Assessments. A t-test for dependent samples was run on participant answers provided in both the Pre- and Post-Forgiveness Seminar Assessments.

The t-test was adapted for this analysis as it compares the means of the scores from the pre- and post-assessment, which measured each person's knowledge of forgiveness among a select group of median adults. Participation in the forgiveness seminar, which considered teachings on five key theological matters of forgiveness and three sessions evaluating three contemporary issues that may hinder forgiveness, made a statistically significant difference, resulting in an increase in their knowledge of what is required to maintain an attitude of forgiveness toward God and others ($t = -8.2, p < .0000$).³⁴

Week 15 was spent considering the process involved in developing a curriculum and leading a seminar. I prepared an outline of these matters and utilized this outline for writing chapters 4 and 5 of this project.

³³ Robert Jones, *Forgiveness: I Just Can't Forgive Myself* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2000), 4-15.

³⁴ See appendix 4.

Conclusion

Counseling members who have failed to maintain an attitude of forgiveness toward God and others is a crucial area of ministry at ODCC. Forgiveness issues show up in every counseling case. This project and the success of the forgiveness seminar have the support of the pastors and elders at ODCC. Additional seminars are being scheduled for two other churches in my region.

The weekend seminar format seemed to be more appealing to the participants. People provided positive feedback about the format because the seminar format enabled provisions for childcare and also gave them an opportunity to request limited amounts of time off from work. On the downside, some participants expressed how overwhelming the information was and they wished that they had more time to process the material.

The materials can be used as a resource for the participants. There are many diagnostic tools, make the connection exercises, and helpful illustrations that can be referenced in the midst of their own relationships—especially relationships where enmity and strife are prevalent. In addition to these tools, I provided a comprehensive biography as a key resource for participants that desire to dig deeper into God’s Word and grow in their understanding and application of forgiveness.

CHAPTER 5
FINAL EVALUATION AND REFLECTION
ON THE FORGIVENESS SEMINAR

Introduction

Benjamin Franklin is widely known for identifying taxes and death as the only things certain in life. But I would like to add a third certainty: unreconciled relationships. The Bible diagnosis the Fall as the underlying problem associated with unreconciled relationships. Genesis 3:15 zeros in more specifically as God’s Word says that there will be enmity between Satan’s offspring and Eve’s offspring. Enmity between these two offspring is exactly what occurs in marriages, friendships, acquaintances, neighbors, etc. It is only through Jesus the Redeemer in Genesis 3:15 that reconciliation is possible. Forgiveness is a major aspect included in the process of reconciliation. Most Christians do not understand what the Bible teaches about the dynamics of forgiveness.

The Forgiveness Seminar Curriculum for this project was developed to teach members at ODCC how to build a theological foundation for forgiveness in order that they would not be “blown about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14). The curriculum was designed to establish a theological and exegetical foundation so members of ODCC may not be hindered by unbiblical teaching relating to issues of forgiveness. The curriculum could be taught in either an eight-hour weekend seminar format or an eight-week Sunday school format. For the purpose of this project, the eight-hour weekend seminar format was selected.

This chapter is an evaluation of the project, including wisdom gained from the experience of hosting a forgiveness seminar.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this project was to develop a biblical forgiveness seminar for members at Open Door Community Church in Shingletown, California. Having developed the biblical forgiveness seminar and having taught the material during the weekend seminar, the answer to whether I fulfilled this purpose is yes. The project was indeed developed and carried out.

However, there was more to the project than a simple *yes* answer. The project involved three necessary goals. The first goal was to assess both the knowledge of and the attitude toward biblical forgiveness among the members of ODCC. I accomplished this goal by creating a twenty-four question Pre-Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Assessment (FSA).¹ I distributed this assessment to 21 of the 30 participants before I began the first session on Friday evening. Out of those 21 assessments, only 18 participants completed the post-FSA. Three participants did not complete the post-FSA for various reasons. One participant did not complete the post-FSA because he had to leave during the fifth session on Saturday to take his wife to the airport. Another participant missed the last two sessions because he needed to feed his neighbor's dog. The third participant failed to complete the post-FSA because he went home sick after session 5. As a result of these three participants inability to complete the post-FSA, I removed their pre-FSA responses and did not include the data in the analysis.²

The original goal had a planned distribution of 30 percent completion rate for those attending the seminar.³ This goal was fulfilled when 18 of 30 participants completed the pre- and post-FSA.⁴ These assessments helped give me a clearer picture of

¹ See appendix 1 for the Pre-Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Assessment (FSA).

² I recorded the sessions and made video-recordings available to those who missed sessions.

³ The 30 percent goal was considered accomplished if both the pre- and post-FSA were completed by each participant.

⁴ Nearly 60 percent of the participants completed both the pre- and post-FSA.

the participants’ knowledge of forgiveness and their attitudes associated with forgiveness before I taught the eight sessions. The pre-FSA helped me understand what content I needed to emphasize during the Forgiveness Seminar. Survey participants needed to broaden their knowledge in the statements recorded in table 1. I learned some key truths concerning the participants. First, the participants needed to learn the importance of understanding forgiveness primarily through the interpretive lens of Scripture. Second, I learned that the ideas of attitudinal and transactional forgiveness were foreign to most participants. Third, I needed to emphasize what the Scriptures teach about both the conditions for transactional forgiveness and the significance of the Lord’s Prayer. Furthermore, it is necessary for participants to understand the importance of forgiveness in relationship to communion.⁵

Table 1. Pre-seminar understanding of theological foundations of attitudinal forgiveness

Survey Statement	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1. Understanding forgiveness is primarily a theological task.	2	2	3	3	6	2
2. I know the difference between attitudinal forgiveness and transactional forgiveness.	2	4	2	3	6	1
4. Relational peace between the Sinning Saint (a Christian who commits sin) and the Suffering Saint (a Christian who is sinned against) can only occur if the sinning Saint repents of his sin.	0	3	6	5	4	0
5. The Scriptures teach that I can lose my salvation if I don’t forgive my brother from my heart.	2	4	4	2	2	3
10. It is wrong to partake of communion if I am unwilling to forgive someone who has sinned against me.	0	2	2	0	10	4
11. I understand the difference between Parental and Judicial Forgiveness.	0	5	2	2	6	3

⁵ Tables 1–2 represent the number of ODCC members who completed the Pre-Seminar Assessment (18) and not the number of members who participated in the seminar (30). For tables 1-2, “SD” stands for “Strongly Disagree,” “D” stands for “Disagree,” “DS” stands for “Disagree Somewhat,” “AS” stands for “Agree Somewhat,” “A” stands for “Agree,” and “SA” stands for “Strongly Agree.”

In addition to testing the participants' knowledge and attitude toward a theological foundation of attitudinal forgiveness, the pre-FSA also helped me understand their knowledge and attitudes of issues that may hinder attitudinal forgiveness. The survey statements in table 2 identified key concepts that I would accentuate in the seminar. First, participants needed to learn that a person's thoughts govern how he feels. Second, I learned that it was essential to demonstrate the importance of the responsibility of the sufferer's role in forgiveness. Third, I learned that I needed to emphasize the value of transactional forgiveness and the role of church discipline in the process of reconciliation. Last, I learned that the participants' attitudes have been influenced by the secular psychological concepts of forgiving God, forgetting the sins of others, and forgiving self.

Table 2. Pre-seminar understanding of issues that may hinder attitudinal forgiveness

Survey Statement	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. I believe that my thoughts determine how I feel.	0	3	1	4	5	5
14. I believe that it is my primary responsibility as a Suffering Christian (one who has been sinned against) to pay attention to myself first.	0	4	5	1	4	4
17. Transactional forgiveness can only occur if certain conditions are met.	1	5	2	2	5	3
19. If I am unable to transact forgiveness with my offender (a Sinning Saint), then I no longer need to be involved in the process of Church Discipline portrayed in Matthew 18:15-20.	0	5	1	4	8	0
24. Counsel that involves forgiving God, forgetting the sins of others, and forgiving yourself will not truly help a person become more like Christ.	3	5	2	2	5	1

The second goal was to develop an eight-session curriculum to train members at ODCC about biblical concepts of forgiveness. I accomplished this goal when 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met and exceeded the sufficient level. My initial meeting with the expert panel enabled me to explain my second goal. I provided the panel with a copy

of chapters 2 and 3 of this project, along with an explanation of session 1.⁶ In addition to these resources, I also provided sessions 1 through 4 and my PowerPoint that complemented the Forgiveness Seminar Leader's Manual. The initial review met the minimum 90 percent criterion requirement. When the initial review was complete, I met with the expert panel again to answer any questions and listen to their feedback. I also provided sessions 5 through 8 for review. At the end of our meeting, copies of the Curriculum Evaluation Rubric were distributed to each person.⁷

The expert panel was given one week to evaluate the second half of my curriculum and offer their comments and suggestions for making improvements. Both the pastor and two professors completed and returned the rubric to me one week from our meeting. After completing the Curriculum Evaluation Rubric, I provided the panel with an opportunity to offer suggestions and comments. I evaluated the Curriculum Evaluation Rubrics and discovered that 90 percent of the rubric evaluation indicators were marked sufficient or above. I finalized the teacher's manual after assessing the information and respective feedback from the pastor and two professors. I also reformatted the content from a Word document to a Pages document and integrated pictures and diagrams to be utilized in the seminar.

The third goal was to teach the seminar and to reassess both the knowledge and attitude of the participants after the seminar. To satisfy the requirements for the third goal, an eight-session weekend seminar was held on November 16 through November 17, 2019. The seminar began at 6:00 p.m. on Friday evening and lasted until 4:30 p.m. on the following Saturday. The pre-FSAs were completed by those who volunteered to participate

⁶ It was important to give a synopsis of session 1 since I did not explain my theological framework in the teaching material of this project.

⁷ See appendix 2.

before the start of session 1 and post-FSAs were completed at the end of session 8 on Saturday evening.⁸

I accomplished the third goal when the mean score increased between pre- and post-FSA, the absolute value of my t-test statistic was larger than t-critical one-tail, and my p-value was less than 0.05. The t-test reported a significant increase in participant knowledge and in the participants' attitudes toward key elements involved in biblical forgiveness. Thus, as the participants knowledge of a theological foundation for forgiveness increased, their attitude toward a willingness to forgive others transactionally became apparent. The results of the paired two sample t-test demonstrate: $t_{(17)} = -8.269$, $p < .0001$.⁹

Strengths of the Project

The first strength of this project was establishing a theological and exegetical foundation for forgiveness. The pastors of ODCC, the BCDM, and expert curriculum review team each expressed the importance of developing a theology of forgiveness. This is why I dedicated the first five sessions to proving that one's understanding of forgiveness should be built upon a theological foundation. Many participants provided positive feedback about how they appreciated looking at forgiveness issues through the perspective of the Bible alone. One participant said he had never considered that the Bible had so much to say about forgiveness. Another participant articulated how she changed her viewpoint on what she believed about the error of forgiving yourself once she knew what the Bible taught about forgiving yourself.

The second strength of this project was found in addressing relevant issues involved with forgiveness. Though the majority of the participants would have preferred to spend the bulk of the seminar time on contemporary forgiveness issues, I believed that

⁸ See appendix 1 and 3.

⁹ See appendix 4.

most of our time together would be better spent if I laid a solid theological foundation. It was only after a theological foundation was put forth that could I begin to address issues such as the errors of forgiving God, forgetting the sins of others, and forgiving yourself. Several participants provided helpful feedback about how they appreciated the clarity of what I called the Great-Commandment-Orientation. Although I did not have the time to tackle all of the contemporary forgiveness issues, I did address what I believe are the greatest hindrances to attitudinal forgiveness. One participant really struggled with forgiving someone in her family that mistreated her as a child. Many of her friends, and even her former pastor, told her that she would never be able to have the peace of God unless she learned to forgive herself. She then stated how thankful she was to ODCC that God finally showed her, through the forgiveness seminar, the answers she was looking for. She said, “The answers were there all along—in the Bible!”

The third strength of this project was found in identifying what God expects from a suffering saint. The emphasis of the entire seminar was placed upon what God expects from the saint who has been sinned against by a sinning saint. In my own experience with counseling, I am oftentimes trying to help a suffering saint. My observation is that the suffering saint is usually the person who comes to counseling even when the sinning saint refuses to participate in counseling.

The fourth strength of the seminar was the fellowship that took place among the group. The most positive feedback I received from the forgiveness seminar related to the participants’ fellowship with each other. My goal for the commercial breaks was to give the members of ODCC time to interact. I knew that time allotted to commercial breaks would shorten my teaching time; however, the allotted time proved to be fruitful when I heard how much the participants appreciated the commercial breaks. The breaks gave them time to not only process the information, but also to interact with other members of ODCC. In addition to the commercial breaks, couples with kids were grateful to have the time to interact with each other, as well as other members. Furthermore, people who were

part of the kitchen crew expressed their gratitude for making their job easy.¹⁰ The seminar method was the first time this kind of ministry was conducted by the BCDM and pastors. The participants have already asked, because they enjoyed the fellowship so much, if the BCDM would be willing to carry out more seminars in the near future.

The fifth strength of the seminar was the location and timing of the event. ODCC was a comfortable place for members. The church is nestled among beautiful pine trees and it is located near Mount Lassen. The five acres of space created an ideal outdoor environment for breaks between sessions. I received positive feedback for many participants because having the seminar at the church prevented them from having to travel.¹¹ Members were thankful for not only the familiar environment, but also for the local venue.

Many participants responded positively about the timing of the seminar. ODCC's praise team expressed their appreciation concerning the Friday evening and Saturday seminar format. The BCDM's choice to conduct a seminar, rather than a weekly Sunday school format, enabled the praise team to participate. Sunday school teachers, the church secretaries, and the sound team indicated that they were also thankful for the timing of the seminar. Lastly, the staff also thanked the BCDM for this format because the timing of the event permitted the set-up and tear-down team enough time to clean up everything before 5:00 p.m. on Saturday presenting no problems for Sunday service the following day.

The sixth strength was the resources obtained from the seminar. I understood from the onset of choosing the seminar method that participants would be bombarded with information. Because of this, it was important to provide solid resources for those who wanted to learn and grow in the area of forgiveness.

¹⁰ Since the event was catered, little preparation time was needed. Thus, the kitchen crew was able to attend most of the sessions and connect with other attendees.

¹¹ ODCC is located 35 miles from Redding, CA. Most events, like the forgiveness seminar, take place in Redding.

The expert curriculum review team complimented the key resource pages located at the end of the Forgiveness Seminar Participant’s Manual. I selected these resources and referenced the resources throughout the seminar. Since I serve as a pastor at ODCC, it was important to me as an undershepherd of Jesus Christ to make sure these resources were biblically sound. Most of these resources were written by biblical counselors.

I also the participants with several resources integrated throughout the eight-sessions. Some of the resources I used included, but were not limited to the following:

1. Paul Tripp’s “Clarifying Responsibility” chart.¹²
2. Jeremy Pierre’s “The Dynamic Heart: Functions” model.¹³
3. Robert Jones “Two-Rejection Reality Chart.”¹⁴
4. Robert Jones “The Throne-Staircase Diagram.”¹⁵

Along with these resources, I also created many of my own graphics to go along with my teaching concepts.

Weaknesses of the Project

The first weakness of the project pertained to the identification pin numbers. During my time on SBTS’s campus for semester 2, the faculty suggested different ideas for maintaining confidentiality while conducting the pre- and post- assessments. At the time, I thought it would be a great idea to have the participants use the last four digits of their phone number as a pin number. However, I did consider in the midst of the process

¹² Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 250.

¹³ Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 17.

¹⁴ Robert Jones, “Two-Rejection Reality Chart” (classroom lecture notes, 80511—*Introduction to Biblical Counseling*, electronic copy, used by permission), 33.

¹⁵ Robert Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 66.

were married couples that had the same phone number. As a result,, I had difficulties matching the pin number for five married couples. Although it took time and help from ODCC's secretaries, we were able to match the pre-FSAs with the post-FSAs.

The second weakness related to trying to cover too much content in session 5. Session 5 was originally designed to be a forty-five-minute teaching with two commercial breaks. Unfortunately, session 5 lasted one hour and fifteen minutes and there were not any commercial breaks. To make matters worse, I did not even finish the session content. Failing to finish the session content was a problem because people were asking for the fill-in-the-blank answers. The problem was further exasperated because the late session delayed lunch.

I decided to utilize ten minutes in the session after lunch to give the class the fill-in-the-blanks. Thus, session 6 was delayed, leaving no room for much needed commercial breaks. Session 6, from my perspective, was by far the worst session of the seminar. Because the commercial breaks were missed, the environment felt much like a lecture, and to make matters worse, session 6 was immediately after lunch. I had to hurry through the content attempting to get back on track before session 7. As a result, I did not explain concepts well and I hurried through the content. Fortunately for me, however, I did get back into the routine for session 7 and concluded the last two sessions with positive interaction.

The third weakness resulted as a by-product of my delay in session 5. I originally designed session 6 to include fifteen minutes at the end for question-and-answer time with the class. I strategically planned for this time. Yet, because I delayed session 5, participants were not able to ask questions. Although the class was unaware of this planned question-and-answer time, I observed the immediate results of my time constraints. The man who said that he needed to leave and feed his neighbor's dog, left after session 6. Additionally, the husband who had to take his wife to the airport, left during session 6. I cannot say for certain that they left because the seminar felt more like a lecture that would

be taught at a seminary. I do know, however, that these two individuals were disconnected during session 6 and if I was in their seat, I probably would have wanted to leave as well. I believe the lack of interaction with the group was the result of two participants leaving. Furthermore, I believe that the class as a whole was disengaged from the content because there were no commercial breaks in session 5 and there was also no time for a fifteen-minute question-and-answer time. Question-and-answer time was important because I taught about a vital error involved with forgiveness issues in session 6. Many participants believed it was necessary to forget the sins of others for transactional forgiveness to genuinely occur. Instead of being able to interact with me, the class received a speedy recovery of session 5 after lunch and then a rapid forty-minute lecture with no time to process information by interacting with others.

The fourth weakness of the project pertained to the seminar format. The pre- and post-FSA revealed something very fascinating. I learned from a comparison of the assessments that ODCC is more inclined to be influenced to come under what the Word of God teaches. I observed the most positive changes come as a result of teaching participants about how theology applied to the concepts of attitudinal forgiveness. However, when it came to the second part of the seminar, I witnessed the power of shaping influences as secular psychologies have impacted thinking on issues that may hinder attitudinal forgiveness from occurring. I realized that the participants needed more time to process their practical theology. The seminar format enabled me to raise awareness about issues such as forgiving God, forgetting the sins of others, and forgiving self. In God's timing, ODCC participants will learn to be influenced more by the Word of God than the ideologies of secular psychology.

What I Would Do Differently

Given the success of the project and positive feedback from the BCDM, pastors, professors, and participants, I will likely be hosting more forgiveness seminars in the summer. The major difference will be that the seminar will not be limited to members of

ODCC, but the seminar will be open to churches in Shasta County, and a few changes will be necessary.

In the future, I will continue to utilize the pre- and post-FSA. I will, however, use a different method for personal identification numbers. I still plan on using the last four digits of the participant's phone number, but for future seminars, I will have the participant add on an "a" and "b" at the end of the four-digit number if two people have the same phone number. If three or more people living in the same house, I will have those participants add "c" or "d" to their four-digit phone number. These new identifiers will make it possible to match the pre- and post- assessments of two or more people using the same four-digit identifier.

Another change that I would make would be to modify session 5. I would trim the content by at least 50 percent. I will not necessarily have to reduce much of the teaching content, but I will need to limit what I say under each point. I could possibly provide the answers to the fill-in-the-blank in the last section. This would be a good solution for avid note-takers. Providing the fill-in answers will also prevent me from having to carry the last section of session 5 into session 6.

In addition to decreasing the content in session 5, I would include two commercial breaks in this session. My failure to finish a session on time and disregard breaks made me see the importance of commercial breaks. I witnessed firsthand what occurs in the body language of the participants when I fail to give them time to articulate the lesson to each other. In the future I will also tactically move the question-and-answer time to the beginning of session 6 since this session is immediately after lunch. Many conference speakers are aware of the challenges of speaking on a session directly after lunch. I will attempt to fill the mindless void of the participants that takes place after lunch and encourage a time of questions-and-answers. A question-and-answers time would give participants the time necessary for their food to settle. After this twenty-minute period, I should be able to transition into a fruitful lecture.

Going forward, along with the seminar format, I also plan on teaching my curriculum in a Sunday school format. The assessment tools I have gained from my project could also be utilized to measure participants' knowledge and attitude toward forgiveness. The Sunday school format would take place before service on Sunday mornings. This format would be another avenue of training for members of ODCC and the Sunday school method would not disrupt the church's regular method of instruction and fellowship.

Theological Reflections

Throughout the development and implementation of this project I emphasized the importance of understanding forgiveness through a theological and exegetical lens. Participants were taught that disciples of Christ are called to build their lives upon the words of Christ (Matt 7:24-27). I have learned a great deal about the words of Christ as they relate to forgiveness. I have given testimony to Scripture's sufficiency on the topic of forgiveness and especially from a suffering saint's perspective.

I presented a theological model for forgiveness in the first session. I utilized Matthew 7:24-27 where Jesus described the parable of the two builders. One phrase that really stood out to me was, "these words of mine" (Matt 7:24,26). The emphasis in the passage is building one's life upon Christ's words in the midst of the storms of life. Since this is true, I regained an unwavering commitment to obtain all of my research from the unadulterated Word of God. The task for my own research involved acquiring biblical wisdom. Although I knew that secular authors possessed no such knowledge relating to the words of Christ, I discovered in my research that many Christian authors were not building their teaching about forgiveness upon the words of Christ. This bothered me because it is as if these Christian integrationists were building their foundation of forgiveness from the sand depicted in Matthew 7:26-27. I learned who consistent and faithful Christian authors were and included the writings of these authors under my Key

Resources section in the Forgiveness Seminar Participant's Manual.¹⁶ My desire was not for the seminar participants to have to do the hard work of sifting through the sand of secular philosophies and counsel relating to forgiveness. Instead, I wanted participants to focus on the biblical resources and build their lives upon the words of Christ.

Another phrase that stood out to me in session 1 was the following: "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt 7:28-29). Matthew's summary statement from the Sermon on the Mount continues to fascinate me for several reasons. First, the crowds were astonished at his teaching. This was a reminder for me that my role as a teacher was to faithfully present the teachings of Christ as they related to forgiveness. No other teaching method will bring about astonishment in people. I experienced this astonishment myself as I surveyed and studied the depth of Christ's teaching on forgiveness. Second, I continue to be fascinated by the authority of Christ. The crowd's astonishment was the by-product of Christ's authoritative teaching. Because I am astonished by the authority of Christ, I want more than ever to build my life upon his teaching. I am also committed to help Christ's church build their lives upon Christ's authoritative teaching. Lives should not be built upon the sand of visions, ceremonies, therapies, experiences, feelings, miracles, philosophies, etc., but exclusively upon the words of Christ.

The last phrase that was also distinguishable was Christ's promise in Matthew 7:25: "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock." I understand that this verse primarily has to do with salvation; however, the promise applies also to saints who live for God by building their lives on the words of Christ. Christians also benefit from the peace that Jesus promised in spite of the storms of life (Phil 4:4-6; Matt 6:33; John 14:27). I

¹⁶ See appendix 5.

love the fact that Jesus promises peace. Not only do I benefit from this promise, but it also applies to the people that I minister the Word of God to in the midst of their storms. I am astonished by Jesus because he speaks with authority as God the Son.

This project has given me greater understanding in my responsibility to maintain Christ-centered in my motivations. I will always be impacted by the four motivations drawn from the Lord's prayer (Matt 6:9-15). Living for God's glory above my own means that I will commit to maintaining an attitude of love toward my offender and I will forgive him if he repents of his sin against me. Forgiving others should be part of a saint's new DNA as a new creation in Christ. My failure to forgive others is a lack of love for God. The Lord's prayer avails arduous language about the consequences of failing to forgive others in Matthew 6:14-15. Jesus is teaching his disciples that if they do not forgive others, then they are acting as if they are not related to him as adopted sons and daughters.¹⁷ This reality centers my attention upon my privilege to call God Father. God is with me and the Holy Spirit helps me live a life that pleases him.

I found the details given by Jesus in Luke 17:1-3 fascinating. In one verse, Jesus clarified his expectations for his disciples about the peacemaking process: "Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him" (v. 3). Robert Jones helped me to recognize a four-fold outline for peacemaking: sin, rebuke, repent, forgive. What amazed me most about this passage concerned the phrase: "Pay attention to yourselves!" The *ordo-perdono*¹⁸ for two-level forgiveness is the following:

1. Pay attention to yourselves.
2. If your brother sins.
3. Rebuke him.

¹⁷ The terms *adopted sons and daughters* is New Testament language. The Sermon on the Mount historically took place before the concept of adoption transpired.

¹⁸ *Ordo-perdono* is a play on words from the phrase *ordo-salutis*. I made this phrase up because *perdono* is the Italian word for forgiveness. Thus, it refers to a series of conceptual steps within the doctrine of forgiveness.

4. If he repents.
5. Forgive him.

The rest of the Scriptures provide the necessary details for these five concepts. It was not until I studied Luke 17:3 in its context that I realized the first-level attitudinal element of the passage. Thus, I can declare with absolute certainty that Jesus taught the concepts of attitudinal forgiveness. I can say this because paying attention to oneself is a call to a saint to control what he has the ability to control.¹⁹

Before I embarked on my journey to study forgiveness on two levels, I could not direct anyone to passages other than Mark 11:25, which teach about attitudinal forgiveness.²⁰ I also came to realize that two-level forgiveness was taught by Jesus in Matthew 18. In Matthew 18:5-9, Jesus teaches his disciples the concept of paying attention to yourselves. I found that Matthew 18:15-17, a passage that contains principles of transactional forgiveness, is included in a greater context. When Matthew 18 is studied in its entirety, I discovered that both levels of forgiveness are incorporated into the chapter.

The project has given me an increased awareness of how forgiveness is meant to reflect the Great Commandment. I learned that a person who is Great-Commandment oriented practices forgiveness. One of the most captivating themes in the Bible is unreconciled relationships with God and others. Unreconciled relationships were the direct result of the Fall in Genesis 3. Man's communion with God and man's fellowship with others was destroyed when sin entered the heart of man. Ephesians 2:1-3 clearly portrays this reality:

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among who we all once lived in the

¹⁹ A person can control his own thoughts, desires, emotions, feelings, words, and actions. These are all concepts of attitudinal forgiveness.

²⁰ Most of the books I read taught that Luke 17:3 teaches transactional forgiveness. This is true, but not completely true, because the passage also teaches the concept of attitudinal forgiveness.

passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

“The rest of mankind” represents every person that has been born into the world after Adam (Rom 5:12). The details described in Ephesians 2:1-3 leave sinners spiritually bankrupt and without hope. The greatest dilemma for humanity is answering the question: How can a person be forgiven by God and restored to a Great-Commandment-orientation? For that to occur, the wrath of God needs to be removed from the sinner (John 3:36). The sinner needs God to intervene. Jesus told Matthew to follow him in Matthew 9:9. Jesus understood the reality of Ephesians 2:1-3. Mathew needed to follow Jesus, not Satan. It was also necessary for Matthew to direct his desires and passions toward God and his kingdom. However, Matthew would not be able to direct his passions and desires unless God intervened on Matthew’s behalf. Ephesians 2:4-5 magnifies the solution to the dilemma of sinners: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.” The divine conjunction “but” is the game changer. God intervenes and makes communion with him possible through the substitutionary and propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus. The Father makes sinners alive. Peter reiterates the same truth: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3). The direct result of a sinner’s born again status is restored communion with God. Furthermore, this restoration renders it possible for saints to love their neighbor as themselves. Understanding forgiveness on two levels is essential. Knowing how forgiveness relates to the Great Commandment also demonstrates the importance of grasping the words of Christ. Great-Commandment forgiveness orientation emphasizes the importance of the suffering saint’s responsibility to maintain an attitude of forgiveness toward God and a willingness to forgive the sinning saint if the condition of repentance is satisfied. God truly is merciful because he has made Great-Commandment forgiveness orientation possible.

Personal Reflections

Developing the forgiveness seminar curriculum has resulted in my own reflection as I consider my identity as a suffering saint. I repeatedly asked myself throughout the project whether I was applying the principles of forgiveness to my own life. Paul Tripp's "Circle of Responsibility" chart was frequently on my mind throughout the process. I learned that although I may not be able to control people and circumstances, God has given me the ability, by walking with his Spirit, to faithfully obey God with my own thoughts, emotions, desires, words, and actions.

In the midst of writing chapter 3, I was working with a couple that wanted marriage counseling. Like every counseling case before this one, I was helping the couple deal with forgiveness. The first few sessions went well. I focused on the gospel, listened to their perspectives about present struggles, and offered them the hope that comes when saints commit to building their lives on the words of Christ. Session 4 was a major turning point in this case. The wife became extremely offended when I gently tried to convey that her husband was not the problem in her marriage. I was attempting to articulate the idea that in marriage we do not have communication problems, but we have character deficiency problems that frequently show up in marriage. We considered Mark 7:14-23 for the majority of session 4. The session ended and I began to prepare for session 5 by explaining the dynamics of James 4:1-11. In between session 4 and session 5 however, there were unloving responses by the wife aimed specifically at attacking me. She did not like what I had to say in session 4. This season was difficult for me. I am grateful for God's providential timing in this situation. In that season of my life, I realized that I had become the suffering saint I was writing about in my project. I remember doing my research for chapter 2 on Mark 11:25. The "I will" commitments recorded in my teaching curriculum are the commitments I wrote down on an index card during that time in my life:

1. I will commit the sinner and her offenses against me to God.
2. I will commit to guarding my own heart against sinful emotions.

3. I will commit myself to God.
4. I will be committed to transactional forgiveness with her if she repents.

Not only did I refer to this index card three times a day, I also wrote down Mark 11:25 on the other side of the index card. I committed this verse to memory and I prayed this verse back to God at least three times a day. In addition to this, I asked my wife to help hold me accountable to these commitments, I also asked a good friend to help me articulate practical ways I could unconditionally love this woman so that I would not overcome evil with evil.²¹

I focused on the things I could control and left this woman in God's care for fixing her heart. As I took every thought captive and made the thought obedient to God's Word, I experienced the peace that is promised in Philippians 4:7 and I also experienced Jesus' promise that my life would not fall apart in the midst of the storm (Matt 7:24-27). About a month ago this woman met with me after church in the presence of her husband and my pastor to ask for forgiveness for her sins against me. I readily granted forgiveness to her because my heart was in the right place. Since my attitude was properly aligned in my worship toward God, I was willing to forgive her when she repented and transactional forgiveness took place.

Working on this project helped me not only grow as a pastoral counselor, but it helped me grow in my marriage and also as a parent. I understand that I am not only a sinner saved by grace, but I am also a work in progress. I know from my own life what it means to be a sinning saint. I thank God for the countless opportunities he has given to me to practice confession and repentance with my wife and kids. I am growing in my walk with Jesus. I appreciate every hour I spent on this project learning knowledge about

²¹ Some of the practical ways I tried to make the invisible Christ visible to her were the following: (1) I hand-wrote a note that included my own gratitude to her and her family. I also welcomed her to talk to me personally in the presence of her husband and my co-counselor about some of the issues she had with me. I told her that I would really like the opportunity to articulate my perspective more clearly if she would allow for that. (2) I went out of my way on Sunday mornings to greet her and ask how I could pray for her. (3) I bought her a coffee cup for Mother's Day.

a biblical foundation for forgiveness and also knowledge about errors that hinder attitudinal forgiveness. I also thank the Lord for giving me opportunities to be a doer of the words of Christ as I have attempted to apply these very concepts to my own life.

Now it is the time to not only continue in my pursuit of drawing nearer to God through Christ, but also for me to give comfort to as many people as the Lord allows in my ministry to others. The apostle Paul blesses God's people with the following words: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's suffering, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too" (2 Cor 1:3-5). I will always consider Paul's words. Biblical counselors are comforted with God's Word. My testimony above proves that fact. Since saints are comforted by God, they can also comfort others with the same comfort from God's Word. This comfort is meant to be reciprocal. Comfort is not limited to biblical counselors. Comfort is for all of God's people. I pray that my home and my local church keep working to be a place of comfort for suffering and sinning saints alike as they reciprocate the forgiveness of Christ to others.

Conclusion

Developing and implementing a forgiveness seminar has been the fulfillment of my desire to equip God's local church. In my time as a biblical counselor, I have discovered that the church as a whole is lacking in the area of progressive sanctification. My exposure to biblical counseling came as I sought to fulfill the requirements for my Master of Divinity degree. Along the way, God providentially placed me in a seminary that required two biblical counseling classes as part of their curriculum. I remember my first class like it was yesterday. I sat under Howard Eyrich and Jeff Forrey. There were approximately ten students in the class, most of whom were NANC certified. I will never forget observing two of these NANC counselors minister the Word of God to a woman

who was also enrolled in the class. She reached out for guidance because her marriage was in turmoil. I watched, over a period of three months, how these counselors ministered the Word of God to her situation. I also witnessed this woman being transformed by the renewing of her mind by the Word of God. I distinctly remember the simple application of the Word. The woman maintained a learning spirit and a desire to do what the Word says. By the end of the semester, she testified to the comfort of God's Word. Her marriage was transformed, and she was like the man in Mark 5:20: "And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled." This woman continued on in the biblical counseling classes and she even recruited more people to audit the class.

Little did she know, nor did the NANC counselors, how much I marveled about the power of God's Word. Immediately after seminary, I met Wayne Johnston and he walked me through every phase of the NANC certification. I became a NANC certified counselor. I was so excited about Johnston's certified classes that I asked if he would be willing to allow me to teach his curriculum to my church. Surprisingly, he gave me permission. I taught one class and I will never forget the response of one of my elders who sat through the class: "Learning the concepts of biblical counseling and applying them to my own life and marriage is like I have been born again, again!" Since this was the experience for most people, I began to dialogue with like-minded pastors in the Redding area. I connected with ten pastors representing eight churches and asked them what they thought about the possibility of equipping their people with Johnston's curriculum. Their response was an exasperated "yes." Johnston continued to mentor me as I began to equip these churches. At that time, I was simply trying to emulate his ministry in Southern California.²²

²² Wayne Johnston has a ministry called Biblical Counseling and Discipleship Association of Southern California, <https://bcdasocal.org>.

The biblical counseling movement in Redding, California, was growing so much that Shasta Bible College and Graduate School reached out and offered me a position as Department Head of Biblical Counseling. The contingency was that I go back to school to fulfill my Doctor of Ministry degree. After much prayer, affirmation from my wife and the elders at ODCC, I applied to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I desired to study under Stuart Scott because I knew of his faithfulness to Christ and I was also aware of how much he impacted Wayne Johnston. I was accepted to SBTS and I now find myself writing these last words to fulfill the requirements of the doctoral program.

The process of writing and carrying out this project enabled me to equip the saints at ODCC to do the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11). Much of the work of ministry is ministering the Word to another believer (Rom 15:14). I have a heart for local churches and this summer I plan on conducting another seminar in a small community located forty minutes from Redding, California. The churches in this community do not have many opportunities to participate in seminars. The seminar approach, because of the location of the town, permits me to play a part in equipping those churches in biblical counseling.

In the future, I plan on using the tools I obtained from SBTS to create another seminar that pertains to the topic of evangelism. I thank my God who made all this possible and I continue to pray that God's people would express the same excitement as my former elder: "It's like I have been born again, again!"

APPENDIX 1

PRE-BIBLICAL FORGIVENESS
SEMINAR ASSESSMENT

Pre-Seminar Assessment

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designated to help develop and conduct a weekend Forgiveness Seminar for members at Open Door Community Church in Shingletown, California.¹ This research is being conducted by Mathew R. Silva for the purpose of completing the requirements for his Doctor of Ministry degree. In this research, you will be asked to participate in a weekend seminar where you will complete both Forgiveness Seminar Assessment and post-Forgiveness Seminar Assessment. You will also be encouraged to actively participate in all sessions of the seminar by asking questions and volunteering answers to questions raised during the seminar. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*. At no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study any time.

By completing the Forgiveness Seminar Assessment and post-Forgiveness Seminar Assessment and signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses and research.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

¹ Michael Wayne Marrs, “Developing a Marriage Enrichment Seminar for Couples at Easthaven Baptist Church, Kalispell, Montana” (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 155. This survey has been adapted from Marrs’ work to fit the needs of this project. Used with permission.

Carefully read each of the following statements and *circle the response* that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

1. Understanding forgiveness is primarily a theological task.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2. I know the difference between attitudinal forgiveness and transactional forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
3. When I am sinned against, I need to release my offender to God's judgment.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4. Relational peace between the Sinning Saint (a Christian who commits the sin) and the Suffering Saint (a Christian who is sinned against) can only occur if the Sinning Saint repents of his sin.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5. The Scriptures teach that I can lose my salvation if I don't forgive my brother from my heart.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6. I believe that I not only need to receive forgiveness from God, but that I also need forgiveness from my brothers and sisters in Christ as a daily provision.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7. My primary motivation for forgiving others from my heart is for God's glory.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8. If I am living to please God, then I will forgive others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9. I am committed to a lifestyle confession and forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10. It is wrong to partake of communion if I am unwilling to forgive someone who has sinned against me.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11. I understand the difference between Parental and Judicial Forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12. I believe that I need to commit my offender's sin against me to God.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. I believe that my thoughts determine how I feel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. I believe that it is my primary responsibility as a Suffering Christian (one who has been sinned against) to pay attention to myself first.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. If I forgive my offender, then I should no longer talk about their sin to others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

16. If I forgive my offender, then I should no longer dwell on that person's sin.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. Transactional forgiveness can only occur if certain conditions are met.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. Jesus said very little about how people should resolve interpersonal conflict.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. If I am unable to transact forgiveness with my offender (a Sinning Saint), then I no longer need to be involved in the process of Church Discipline portrayed in Matthew 18:15-20.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. Sometimes I need to forgive God for my circumstances.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. Forgiving God is justifiable under extreme situations.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. If I truly forgive someone, then I need to forget my offender's sins.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I believe that forgiving yourself is the key to moving on in difficult circumstances.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. Counsel that involves forgiving God, forgetting the sins of others, and forgiving yourself will not truly help a person become more like Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

Personal Identification Number: <i>(last 4 digits of your phone number)</i>	
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Please place this survey in the envelop and return it to the church office. Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM EVALUATION AGREEMENT

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designated to help develop and conduct a weekend Forgiveness Seminar for members at Open Door Community Church in Shingletown, California. This research is being conducted by Mathew R. Silva for the purpose of completing the requirements for his Doctor of Ministry degree. In this research, you will be asked to evaluate and critique the Biblical Forgiveness curriculum to help me determine its strengths and weaknesses for use in the eight-hour seminar using the Curriculum Rating Rubric. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*. At no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study any time.

By completing this Curriculum Evaluation Rubric and signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses and research.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Curriculum Evaluation					
Session 1 Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of Biblical forgiveness.					
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on Biblical forgiveness.					
The material is theologically sound.					
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.					
The lesson contains points of practical application.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.					

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC 1

Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Curriculum Evaluation					
To the right of each criteria listed, the number of reviewers responding with 1/2/3 or 4 for the specific criteria listed. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns are included in the comments section for the respective criterion.					
Session 1: A Theological Model for Attitudinal Forgiveness					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of Biblical forgiveness.			1	2	It is relevant if the teacher believes they have set the stage for the students in regard to them trusting in and acting on the Word of God where forgiveness is concerned.
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on Biblical forgiveness.			2	1	The material is faithful to showing someone why they should trust in and act on the Word of God where forgiveness is concerned.
The material is theologically sound.			1	2	
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			1	2	I agree that establishing a theological framework for forgiveness is important.
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.			2	1	
The lesson contains points of practical application.			1	2	
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			1	2	
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			1	2	

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC 2

Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Curriculum Evaluation					
To the right of each criteria listed, the number of reviewers responding with 1/2/3 or 4 for the specific criteria listed. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns are included in the comments section for the respective criterion.					
Session 2: Christ-Centered Motivations					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of Biblical forgiveness.			1	2	
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on Biblical forgiveness.			1	2	
The material is theologically sound.			1	2	Motivations from the Lord's Prayer were very applicable to the topic of forgiveness.
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			2	1	
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.			1	2	
The lesson contains points of practical application.			1	2	
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			1	2	I might also add that another motivation to forgive others is simply a command of God – Matthew 18:21-22.
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			1	2	I like how you selected a familiar passage and drew some things out of the passage that people can relate to.

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC 3

Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Curriculum Evaluation					
To the right of each criteria listed, the number of reviewers responding with 1/2/3 or 4 for the specific criteria listed. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns are included in the comments section for the respective criterion.					
Session 3: Christ-Centered Attitude of Worship					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of Biblical forgiveness.			2	1	
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on Biblical forgiveness.			2	1	Mark 11:25 is a wonderful verse that pertains to what God requires of the suffering saint.
The material is theologically sound.			1	2	When you teach this material, be careful to consider the surrounding passages.
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			2	1	
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.			1	2	
The lesson contains points of practical application.			2	1	
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			1	2	I agree when only Mark 11:20-24 is considered but there may be other Scriptures to include to show a Christ-Centered Attitude of Worship/Forgiveness – maybe time won't allow for it!
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.				1	

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

1. Jay Adams began the conversation about “attitudinal forgiveness,” but I like the way that you continued and really added to the conversation. Good job.

COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC 4

Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Curriculum Evaluation					
To the right of each criteria listed, the number of reviewers responding with 1/2/3 or 4 for the specific criteria listed. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns are included in the comments section for the respective criterion.					
Session 4: Christ-Centered Attitude of Reconciliation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of Biblical forgiveness.				3	
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on Biblical forgiveness.				3	It makes sense that you included Luke 17:3 in regard to what God expects of both the suffering saint and sinning saint.
The material is theologically sound.				3	
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.				3	
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.			2	1	
The lesson contains points of practical application.			1	2	Great job applying this passage through the eyes of a suffering saint. Thanks for the insight about what a tentative rebuke really means.
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			2	1	
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			1	2	

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC 5

Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Curriculum Evaluation					
To the right of each criteria listed, the number of reviewers responding with 1/2/3 or 4 for the specific criteria listed. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns are included in the comments section for the respective criterion.					
Session 5: Christ-Centered Attitude of Faith in God's Provision					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of Biblical forgiveness.				3	
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on Biblical forgiveness.			3		It's only later manuscripts that add "against you." I personally would not include this phrase as part of the text. This changes things because it involves sins that are obvious but not necessarily toward the person who might confront. How this might play out is if a sinning member of a church has sinned against God but not against another believing member, he could not be confronted. We had a man who claims to be a believer who married an unbeliever. He didn't sin against myself or the other elders, but I went to him first under Matthew 18 followed by our elders. It would seem that under "against you," this could not have happened.
The material is theologically sound.			3		
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			3		
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.			3		
The lesson contains points of practical application.			2	1	A lot more could be said as to how to go about this process and the amount of time that may be needed. Also, doesn't deal with how church leaders might be utilized and how the church might be involved to seek their repentance and restoration.
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			3		
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			3		

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC 6

Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Curriculum Evaluation					
To the right of each criteria listed, the number of reviewers responding with 1/2/3 or 4 for the specific criteria listed. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns are included in the comments section for the respective criterion.					
Session 6: Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness Part 1: Forgiving God					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of Biblical forgiveness.			1	2	This teaching should be taught in every church.
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on Biblical forgiveness.			1	2	
The material is theologically sound.				3	
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			2	1	
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.				3	
The lesson contains points of practical application.			1	2	
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.				3	I especially enjoyed the section on biblical lamenting.
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.			2	1	

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

1. There is a great illustration of someone unbiblically forgiving God in the account of Seth Dahl, children's pastor at Bethel Church in Redding, CA where he claims he had a vision in which Jesus asked him for forgiveness. He explains that a pastor he respected said something that hurt him and caused him great sorrow. Then, as he was lying on the floor reflecting on this, Jesus appeared to him in a vision and took the blame, weeping and asking Dahl to forgive *Him* for the pain he felt.

COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC 7

Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Curriculum Evaluation					
To the right of each criteria listed, the number of reviewers responding with 1/2/3 or 4 for the specific criteria listed. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns are included in the comments section for the respective criterion.					
Session 7: Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness Part 2: Forgetting the Sins of Others					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of Biblical forgiveness.				3	I wish I would have known how to handle this particular issue. Your insight was fantastic, and I will utilize your teaching if I encounter this forgiveness issue in the future.
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on Biblical forgiveness.				3	
The material is theologically sound.				3	
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.				3	
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.				3	
The lesson contains points of practical application.				3	Yes, under "Practicalities." I think every main section should have a subsection. I'm always about application and helping people to see what might be some of the specifics of application. I've heard it said that John MacArthur gives very little practical application in his sermons – that he relies on the Holy Spirit to show each believer how to apply the truths they learned to their life. For me personally, I like to go a step further and offer some possible specific points of application to whoever is listening to me, thinking about who they are and what some of the specific points may be for them. I think at the least it helps to get the ball rolling and the wheels in their heads turning!
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.				3	
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.				3	

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

1. I especially liked this section as it deals with a question I think many ask, the difference between God 'forgetting' and 'not remembering' sins.

COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC 8

Biblical Forgiveness Seminar Curriculum Evaluation					
To the right of each criteria listed, the number of reviewers responding with 1/2/3 or 4 for the specific criteria listed. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns are included in the comments section for the respective criterion.					
Session 8: Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness Part 3: Forgiving Yourself					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of Biblical forgiveness.			2	1	This is probably the most relevant issue within Evangelical Christianity. Thank you for addressing this issue.
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on Biblical forgiveness.			2	1	
The material is theologically sound.				3	
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.			1	2	
The points of the lesson clearly support the thesis.				3	
The lesson contains points of practical application.			1	2	The ABC's of forgiving yourself are memorable and helpful. Also, thanks for the extra "D" (diagnosis).
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.				3	
Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.				3	

Please include any additional comments regarding the curriculum below:

1. It took me a while to figure out what the Focus on the Family quote was saying. Appreciated all the research about the self-esteem movement. Frankly, I think that's still huge today and could have been expanded upon.

APPENDIX 3

POST-BIBLICAL FORGIVENESS SEMINAR ASSESSMENT

Post-Seminar Assessment

Carefully read each of the following statements and *circle the response that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement.*

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA	
1. Understanding forgiveness is primarily a theological task.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2. I know the difference between attitudinal forgiveness and transactional forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
3. When I am sinned against, I need to release my offender to God's judgment.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4. Relational peace between the Sinning Saint (a Christian who commits the sin) and the Suffering Saint (a Christian who is sinned against) can only occur if the Sinning Saint repents of his sin.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5. The Scriptures teach that I can lose my salvation if I don't forgive my brother from my heart.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6. I believe that I not only need to receive forgiveness from God, but that I also need forgiveness from my brothers and sisters in Christ as a daily provision.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7. My primary motivation for forgiving others from my heart is for God's glory.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8. If I am living to please God, then I will forgive others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9. I am committed to a lifestyle confession and forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10. It is wrong to partake of communion if I am unwilling to forgive someone who has sinned against me.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11. I understand the difference between Parental and Judicial Forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

12. I believe that I need to commit my offender's sin against me to God.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. I believe that my thoughts determine how I feel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. I believe that it is my primary responsibility as a Suffering Christian (one who has been sinned against) to pay attention to myself first.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. If I forgive my offender, then I should no longer talk about their sin to others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. If I forgive my offender, then I should no longer dwell on that person's sin.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. Transactional forgiveness can only occur if certain conditions are met.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. Jesus said very little about how people should resolve interpersonal conflict.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. If I am unable to transact forgiveness with my offender (a Sinning Saint), then I no longer need to be involved in the process of Church Discipline portrayed in Matthew 18:15-20.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. Sometimes I need to forgive God for my circumstances.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. Forgiving God is justifiable under extreme situations.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. If I truly forgive someone, then I need to forget my offender's sins.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I believe that forgiving yourself is the key to moving on in difficult circumstances.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. Counsel that involves forgiving God, forgetting the sins of others, and forgiving yourself will not truly help a person become more like Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

Personal Identification Number: <i>(last 4 digits of your phone number)</i>	
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How has this seminar proved helpful to you?

What area of your personal life has been most challenged?

How has your view of biblical forgiveness changed from the start of the seminar?

True or False. I attended all the sessions on Friday evening and Saturday:

Please place this survey in the envelop and we will retrieve them soon.

APPENDIX 4

T-TEST

PRE-TEST RESULTS																								
PIN	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24
1625	5	5	5	2	2	2	5	6	6	5	5	5	4	3	6	6	2	6	5	6	6	5	5	5
7185	6	5	6	4	4	6	6	6	6	3	5	5	5	6	6	5	6	6	4	4	4	1	2	1
3139	3	3	5	3	2	3	6	5	5	5	4	2	5	3	5	5	3	1	5	6	6	2	2	5
1674	2	2	5	5	5	2	5	5	5	5	2	2	2	2	5	5	2	5	5	5	5	2	2	5
1675	4	2	5	4	2	5	5	5	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	2	2	2	1	2	4
7434	4	5	4	3	5	6	4	6	4	5	5	5	6	2	6	5	2	6	5	5	5	4	2	1
5204	5	2	5	5	3	5	6	6	6	5	2	5	6	5	5	5	5	4	4	6	5	2	2	2
4934	4	3	3	4	6	4	5	4	3	2	2	4	2	3	3	5	5	6	2	1	2	2	3	6
5348	1	6	5	2	3	5	6	6	6	5	2	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	2
4695	3	1	6	3	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	3	6	4	3	6	6	4	5	5	6	5	2	2
1752	2	4	5	4	2	5	6	6	5	5	6	5	3	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	1	2
5383	5	2	5	4	3	3	6	6	3	5	4	6	4	3	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	1	1	3
1378	5	4	6	3	3	4	6	5	5	5	5	6	6	4	4	5	5	6	2	6	1	4	3	4
3133	1	4	6	3	5	3	5	6	5	6	2	5	4	2	6	6	3	4	5	5	5	5	4	1
1850	5	5	4	3	1	3	5	5	4	6	5	5	2	2	5	5	2	1	2	5	6	2	2	2
3246	6	1	6	5	1	5	6	5	5	3	6	4	5	5	6	5	1	3	2	1	2	1	2	5
1175	5	5	6	2	6	6	6	6	6	6	3	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	6	6	3	4	5
1860	3	5	6	5	4	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	5	5	5	6	2	4	4	4	2	1	2	3
POST-TEST RESULTS																								
PIN	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24
1625	6	6	6	6	6	2	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7185	6	6	6	6	1	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	1	6	6
3139	5	5	4	5	3	3	4	5	6	5	5	4	6	5	6	6	1	3	4	6	6	1	1	6
1674	5	5	5	5	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	2	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	2	2	2	2
1675	5	5	5	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	2	2	2	2	2	5
7434	5	6	6	6	1	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	1
5204	2	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	4	5	5	6	6	1	1	2
4934	6	6	2	3	5	5	6	5	6	2	6	6	3	6	6	6	6	6	2	2	1	2	2	6
5348	6	5	6	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6
4695	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
1752	2	5	6	5	6	6	6	6	5	6	5	2	5	5	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	1	5	1
5383	6	5	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	2	2	3
1378	6	6	5	5	2	5	6	5	6	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	2	2	2
3133	5	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6
1850	5	5	5	4	2	2	6	6	6	6	5	5	4	1	6	5	5	6	1	6	6	5	6	6
3246	6	5	5	6	1	6	5	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	2	2	6	6	1	2	5
1175	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6
1860	5	5	6	6	5	5	6	4	6	6	5	6	5	5	6	6	5	5	2	6	6	1	1	2

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	<i>PRE-TEST TOTAL</i>	<i>POST-TEST-TOTAL</i>
Mean	102.0555556	121.4444444
Variance	126.6437908	238.0261438
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	0.765204605	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t Stat	-8.269224469	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0000001159512	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	2.31902E-07	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

APPENDIX 5
FORGIVENESS SEMINAR LEADER'S MANUAL



FORGIVENESS

AS FAR AS THE EAST IS TO THE WEST

**FORGIVENESS
SEMINAR**

*Maintaining an attitude of forgiveness
for God's glory, God's Name, and God's will*

P R E - S E M I N A R A S S E S S M E N T

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designated to help develop and conduct a weekend Forgiveness Seminar for members at Open Door Community Church in Shingletown, California. This research is being conducted by Mathew R. Silva for the purpose of completing the requirements for his Doctor of Ministry degree. In this research, you will be asked to participate in a weekend seminar where you will complete both Forgiveness Seminar Assessment and post-Forgiveness Seminar Assessment. You will also be encouraged to actively participate in all sessions of the seminar by asking questions and volunteering answers to questions raised during the seminar. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential. At no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study any time.

By completing the Forgiveness Seminar Assessment and post-Forgiveness Seminar Assessment and signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses and research.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Carefully read each of the following statements and circle the response that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement.

Strongly Disagree (SD)	Disagree (D)	Disagree Somewhat (DS)	Agree Somewhat (AS)	Agree (A)	Strongly Agree (SA)
------------------------	--------------	------------------------	---------------------	-----------	---------------------

1. Understanding forgiveness is primarily a theological task.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
2. I know the difference between attitudinal forgiveness and transactional forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
3. When I am sinned against, I need to release my <i>offender</i> to God's judgment.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
4. Relational peace between the Sinning Saint (a Christian who commits the sin) and the Suffering Saint (a Christian who is sinned against) can only occur if the Sinning Saint repents of his sin.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
5. The Scriptures teach that I can lose my salvation if I don't forgive my brother from my heart.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
6. I believe that I not only need to receive forgiveness from God, but that I also need forgiveness from my brothers and sisters in Christ as a daily provision.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
7. My primary motivation for forgiving others from my heart is for God's glory.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8. If I am living to please God, then I will forgive others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9. I am committed to a lifestyle confession and forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10. It is wrong to partake of communion if I am unwilling to forgive someone who has sinned against me.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11. I understand the difference between Parental and Judicial Forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12. I believe that I need to commit my offender's sin against me to God.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13. I believe that my thoughts determine how I feel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14. I believe that it is my primary responsibility as a Suffering Christian (one who has been sinned against) to pay attention to myself first.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. If I forgive my offender, then I should no longer talk about their sin to others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

Carefully read each of the following statements and circle the response that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement.

Strongly Disagree (SD)	Disagree (D)	Disagree Somewhat (DS)	Agree Somewhat (AS)	Agree (A)	Strongly Agree (SA)	
16. If I forgive my offender, then I should no longer dwell on that person's sin.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. Transactional forgiveness can only occur if certain conditions are met.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. Jesus said very little about how people should resolve interpersonal conflict.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. If I am unable to transact forgiveness with my offender (a Sinning Saint), then I no longer need to be involved in the process of Church Discipline portrayed in Matthew 18:15-20.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. Sometimes I need to forgive God for my circumstances.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. Forgiving God is justifiable under extreme situations.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. If I truly forgive someone, then I need to forget my offender's sins.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I believe that forgiving yourself is the key to moving on in difficult circumstances.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. Counsel that involves forgiving God, forgetting the sins of others, and forgiving yourself will not truly help a person become more like Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: <i>(List the last 4 digits of your phone number)</i>						

Please place this survey in the envelop and return it to Pastor Silva. Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

Welcome	2
Seminar Speaker	3
Seminar Schedule	4
<u>Part 1: Theological Foundations of Attitudinal Forgiveness</u>	
Session 1: A Theological Model for Attitudinal Forgiveness	6
Session 2: Christ-Centered Motivations	12
Session 3: Christ-Centered Attitude of Worship	16
Session 4: Christ-Centered Attitude of Reconciliation	23
Session 5: Christ-Centered Attitude of Faith in God's Provision	32
<u>Part 2: Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness</u>	
Session 6: The Error of Forgiving God	41
Session 7: The Error of Forgetting the Sins of Others	49
Session 8: The Error of Forgiving Yourself	54
Key Resources	57

W E L C O M E !

I would like to welcome you to my Forgiveness Seminar. Thank you for taking time away from your precious schedules to participate in this eight-session series. My seminar fulfills the project requirements for the Doctor's program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I began this journey in 2016 and, God willing, I will finish my degree in May of 2020.

I have provided this "*Forgiveness Seminar Participant's Manual*" as a resource for you. I encourage you to take notes throughout the seminar. I attribute much of the content to many of the Key Resources located on pages 57-58. I have included these resources for those who want to study this topic further.

The content of the sessions are divided into two parts. Sessions 1-5 relate to "*Part 1: Theological Foundations of Attitudinal Forgiveness.*" After the theological foundation is laid, I will utilize Sessions 6-8 to interact with three popular topics within the Evangelical community. I have entitled Sessions 6-8 as, "*Part 2: Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness.*"

On Saturday Open Door Community Church will provide lunch from Chipotle on site. On both Friday evening and Saturday we will provide coffee (*Starbucks*), water, and condiments (*veggies, cookies, etc.*). So help yourself!

I am certainly glad that you are here and I look forward to serving you this weekend. I pray that this material will not only bless you, but that it will also help you as God providentially places people in your life who need the hope from God's Word. I pray that you will be encouraged, equipped, and edified. While the Apostle Paul meant for the words below to be primarily for the church in Thessalonica, I want you to know that I feel the same way about you!

We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:3-4).

Pastor Matt Silva

Pastor Silva ministers at Open Door Community Church in Shingletown where he serves as pastor of biblical counseling/discipleship. He is also Department Head of Biblical Counseling at Shasta Bible College and Graduate School. He is currently working with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (known as ACBC) in order to certify Shasta Bible College and Graduate School as a certified training center. He is a level-two certified biblical counselor with the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors. He graduated with a Masters of Divinity from Trinity Theological Seminary in 2012. Currently, he is pursuing a Doctors in Ministry with an emphasis in Biblical Counseling at The Southern Theological Seminary. He is also working towards becoming a "Fellow" with the ACBC.



The Silva Clan

Matt is happily married to Erin. They have been married for nearly 18 years. Matt and Erin have four children: Kaitlyn, Elijah, Colin, and Makayla.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Friday, November 15th, 2019

Session 1	A Theological Model for Attitudinal Forgiveness	5:00 p.m.
<i>Break 6:00 p.m.</i>		
Session 2	Christ-Centered Motivations	6:15 p.m.
<i>Break 7:20 p.m.</i>		
Session 3	Christ-Centered Attitude of Worship	7:35 p.m. <i>The schedule should conclude by 8:30 p.m.</i>

Saturday, November 16th, 2019

Session 4	Christ-Centered Attitude of Reconciliation	9:00 a.m.
<i>Break 10:00 a.m.</i>		
Session 5	Christ-Centered Attitude of Faith in God's Provision	10:15 a.m.
<i>Break 11:15 a.m.</i>		
Session 6	Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness Part 1: Forgiving God	11:30 a.m.
<i>Lunch 12:30 p.m.</i>		
Session 7	Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness Part 2: Forgetting the Sins of Others	1:30 p.m.
<i>Break 2:30 p.m.</i>		
Session 8	Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness Part 3: Forgiving Yourself	2:45 p.m. <i>The schedule should conclude by 4:00 p.m.</i>



**FRIDAY
EVENING**
FORGIVENESS

AS FAR AS THE EAST IS TO THE WEST

(Sessions One - Three)

PSALM 103:12



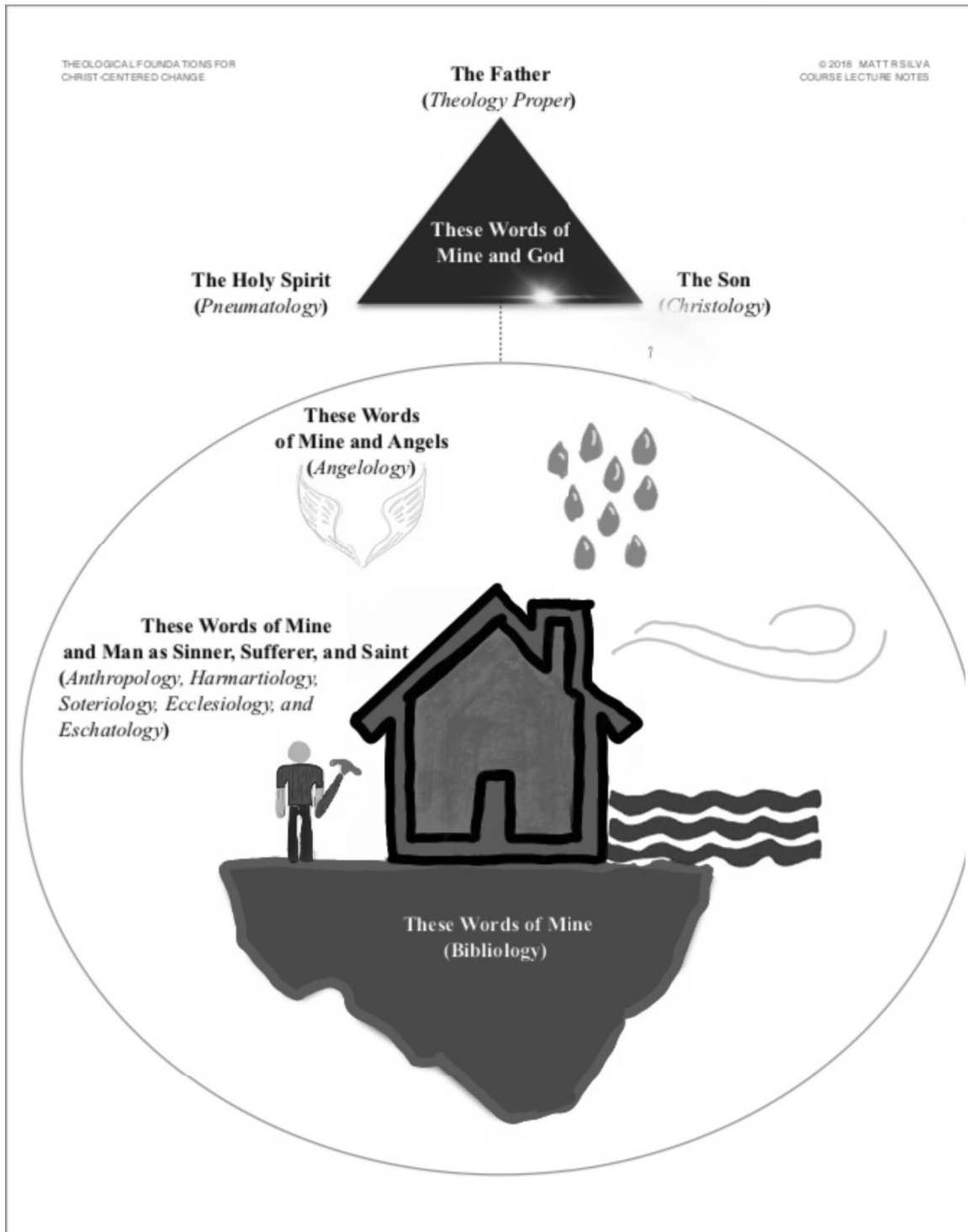
FIRM FOUNDATION

MATTHEW 7:24-27

PART 1: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ATTITUDINAL FORGIVENESS

The first five sessions includes four passages from the synoptic gospels which teach that Suffering Saints must cultivate both an attitude of forgiveness and an openness to forgive others. The first two passages describe the kind of attitude needed in relation to motivations and the kind of worship one expresses toward God. The next two passages corresponded to a Suffering Saint's attitude of both openness to forgive others and an attitude of faith in God's resources if reconciliation is not possible.

SESSION 1 - A THEOLOGICAL MODEL



A Theological Model For Attitudinal Forgiveness

1. **The Triangle and Circle.** The triangle and circle represent God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. **The Rock.** The rock equates to "these words of mine."
3. **The House.** The house represents a person's life.
4. **The Rain, Floods, and Winds.** The rain, floods, and winds characterizes a theology of suffering.
5. **The Angels.** The angel wings symbolize both demons and angels that did not fall.
6. **The Man.** The man typifies saints, sinners, and sufferers.

Make the Connection (*The Wise Builder*)

1. There are only two builders.
2. The wise man built his house on "**these words of mine**."
3. The result of building one's life upon the words of Christ will be a life that will not fall apart.

Make the Connection (*The Foolish Builder*)

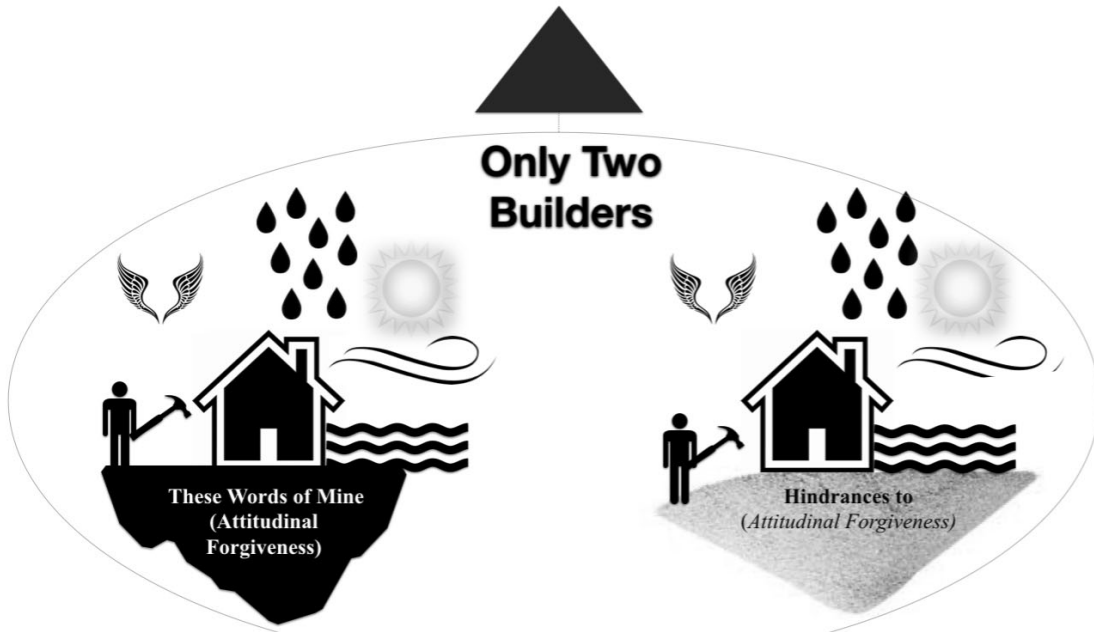
1. The foolish builder built his house on the sand.
2. The foolish builder is also subjected to the triple threat - rain, floods, and winds.
3. The consequences of the foolish builder are eternal judgment and living habitually according to the flesh.

Make the Connection (*To Your Own Life*)

1. Jesus is speaking to everyone.
2. The phrase, "**these words of mine**," is the emphasis of the passage.
3. Every person is a builder.
4. There are only two ways to build your life.
5. Discipleship involves not only hearing and believing, but believing and doing.
6. Lives should not be built upon visions, ceremonies, experiences, feelings, miracles, philosophies, psychologies, etc. - BUT upon the Word of God.

My Prayer for You in Relationship to this Seminar

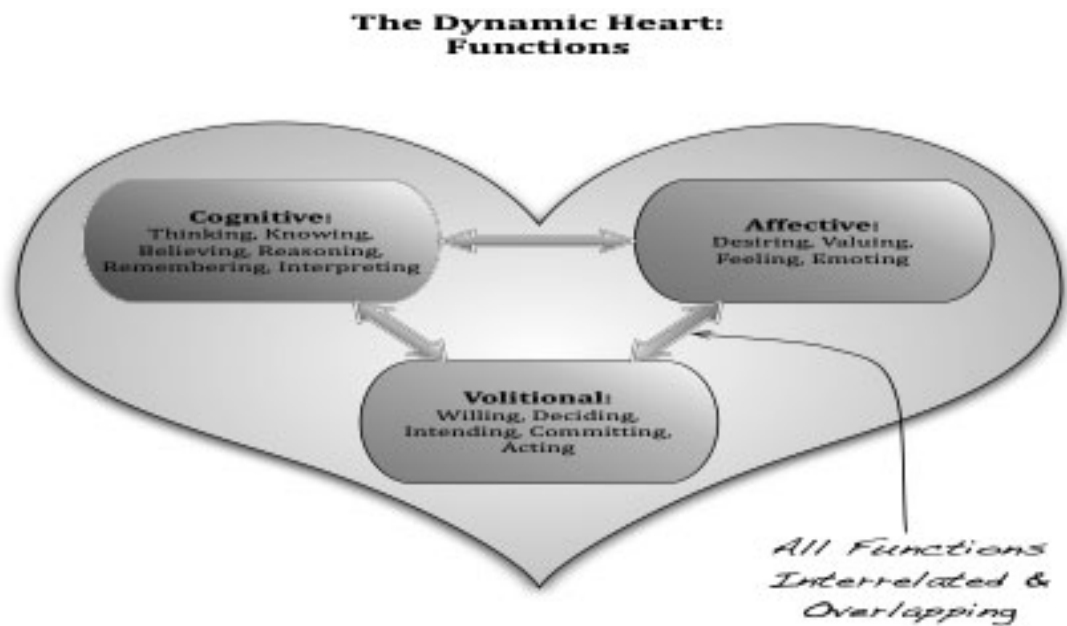
1. Build your life on the words of Christ.
2. Be astonished at the authoritative teaching of Christ.



What is Attitudinal Forgiveness?

The unconditional and personal heart response to God whereby the offended (Suffering Saint) commits the offender (Sinning Saint) to God's judgment, guards his own heart against walking in the flesh, and is willing to reconcile with the offender if he repents.

Notes:



© Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*

Notes:

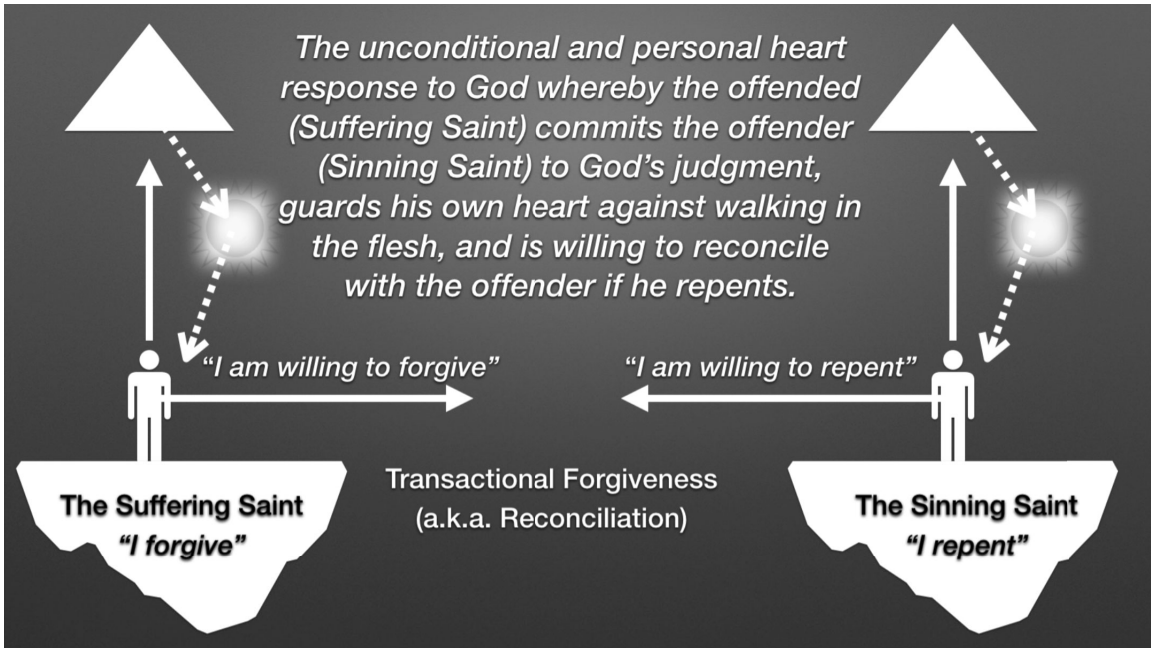
- ◆ whereby the offended commits the offender to God's judgment,
- ◆ guards his own heart against walking in the flesh,



© Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*

- ◆ and is willing to reconcile with the offender if he repents.

Summary of Attitudinal Forgiveness:



SESSION 2 - CHRIST-CENTERED MOTIVATIONS

Introduction: Matthew 6:9-15

Why Should I Forgive a Sinning Christian From My Heart?

1. I will forgive the Sinning Saint from my heart for God's **glory** (Matthew 6:9-10).
 - ◆ This should be the primary **motivation**.
 - ◆ Jesus summarized the entire Old Testament in two commandments (Matt 22:37).
 - ◆ Jesus initiates his model prayer by focusing the worshipper's attention on the glory of God's **name** (Matt 6:9b), God's **kingdom** (Matt 6:10a), and God's **will** (Matt 6:10b).

Notes:

➔ God's **name** (Matt 6:9b).

➔ God's **kingdom** (Matt 6:10a).

➔ God's **will** (Matt 6:10b).

2. I will forgive the Sinning Saint from my heart because God is my Heavenly Father.

- ◆ The language of father was employed by Jesus in the Lord's Prayer.

Notes:

- ◆ Jesus is not referring to judicial forgiveness in Matthew 6:14-15.

Notes:

- ◆ Instead, he is expressing parental forgiveness.

Notes:

3. I will forgive the Sinning Saint from my heart because I need God's forgiveness.

- ◆ Christians need forgiveness from God as much as they need physical bread and spiritual protection (Matthew 6:11-13).

Notes:

- ◆ The need for daily forgiveness assumes that a Christian will **sin** after he is born again.

Notes:

- ◆ God will intervene in the life of his children when they choose unrighteousness through **discipline** (Heb 12:5-11) and by providing the provision for **sin** (1 John 1:9).

Notes:

4. I will forgive the Sinning Saint from my heart because I need to be forgiven by **others**.

- ◆ The use of **plural pronouns** in the Lord's Prayer accentuates a community setting.

Notes:

- ◆ God expects his children to **reciprocate** the forgiveness they have received from him.

Notes:

Summary of Christ-Centered Motivations:



SESSION 3 - CHRIST-CENTERED ATTITUDE OF WORSHIP

Introduction: Mark 11:25

What kind of attitude should a suffering saint maintain toward a sinning Christian as he communes with his heavenly father?

The Context of the Suffering Saint (Mark 11:20-24)

1. Jesus is teaching his disciples a **lesson** about a withered figged tree.
2. Jesus uses this moment with his disciples as an opportunity to apply lessons about **prayer**.

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours (Mark 11:24).

The Circumstances of the Suffering Saint (Mark 11:25)

1. Jesus describes a worshipper who is praying to God **alone**.

Notes:

2. Jesus communicated the necessity of forgiving your offender **whenever**.

Notes:

The Command of the Suffering Saint (Mark 11:25)

1. Jesus commanded his disciples to forgive **anyone** with whom they had a problem.

Notes:

2. Jesus commanded his disciples to forgive their offender for **anything**.

Notes:

3. Jesus commanded his disciples to **keep on** forgiving their offender for anything.

Notes:

The Conditions of the Suffering Saint (Mark 11:25)

First Condition: "If" you have anything against anyone

1. Jesus alarms his disciples about any situation involving a **Triple A** in the context of prayer.

Notes:

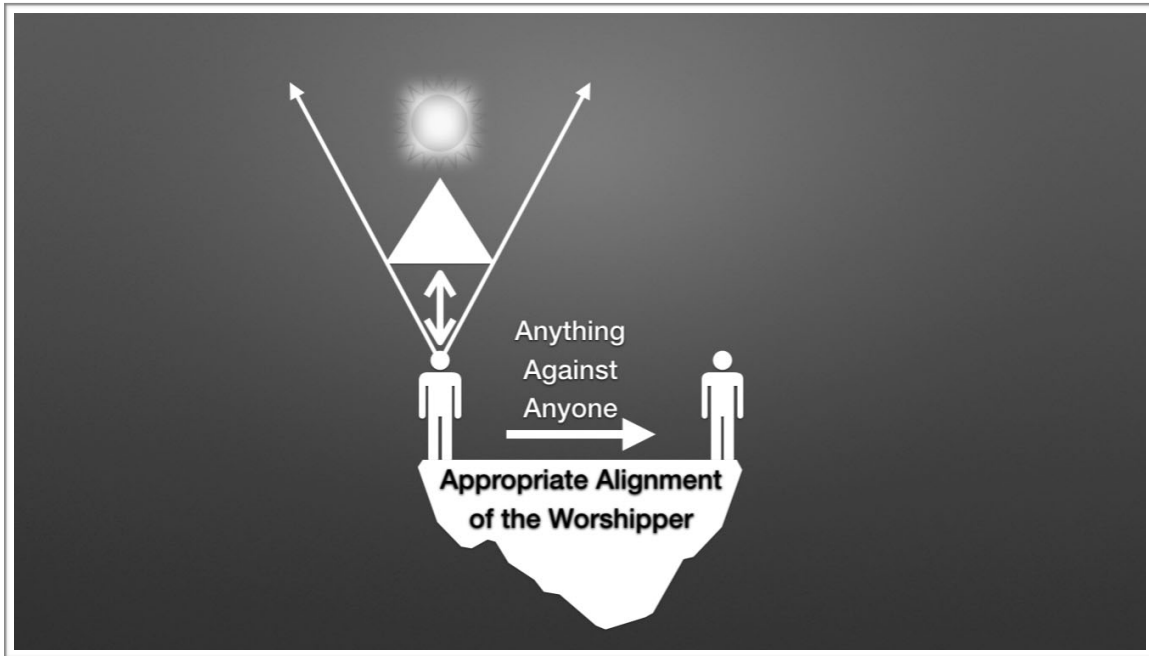
2. Jesus knew that the **gospel** is for real people living in a fallen world.

Notes:

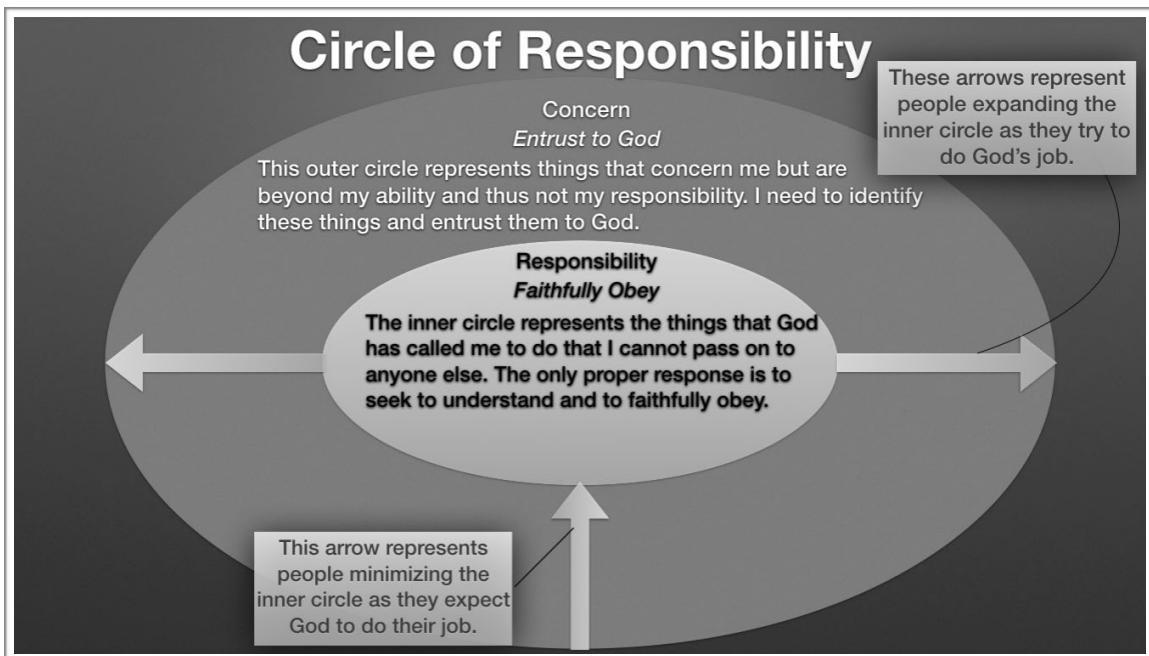
3. Suffering Saints must be **willing** to forgive their offender because an **unwilling** attitude distorts worship and breaches **communion** with God.

Notes:

What is the biblical solution to the circumstances influencing the peripheral vision?:



Circle of Responsibility: (adapted from Paul Tripp)

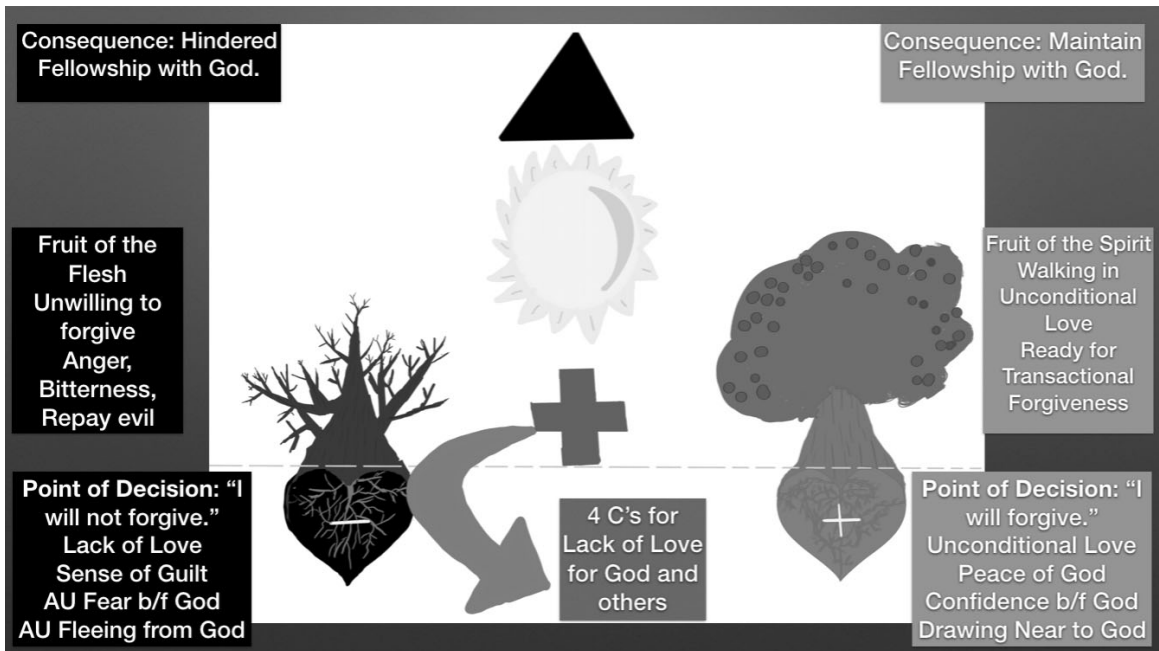


Second Condition: "So that" your Father may forgive your trespasses.

1. Jesus uses the phrase "your Father" to identify this kind of forgiveness as **Parental**.

Notes:

What happens as a result of the Suffering Saint's refusal to forgive the offender from his heart?



The Commitments of the Suffering Saint (Mark 11:25)

1. I will commit the sinner and his offenses against me to **God**.

Notes:

2. I will commit to guarding my own **heart** against sinful **emotions**.

Notes:

3. I will commit **myself** to God.

Notes:

4. I will be committed to **transactional** forgiveness.

Notes:

Make the Connection (Mark 11:25)

1. The Suffering Saint glorifies God when he is obedient to Christ's **command** in Mark 11:25.

Notes:

2. The Suffering Saint will not be controlled by sinful **emotions**.

Notes:

3. The Suffering Saint will not take matters into his own hands.

Notes:

4. The Suffering Saint's perspective will be transformed.

Notes:



FORGIVENESS

AS FAR AS THE EAST IS TO THE WEST

PSALM103:12

SATURDAY

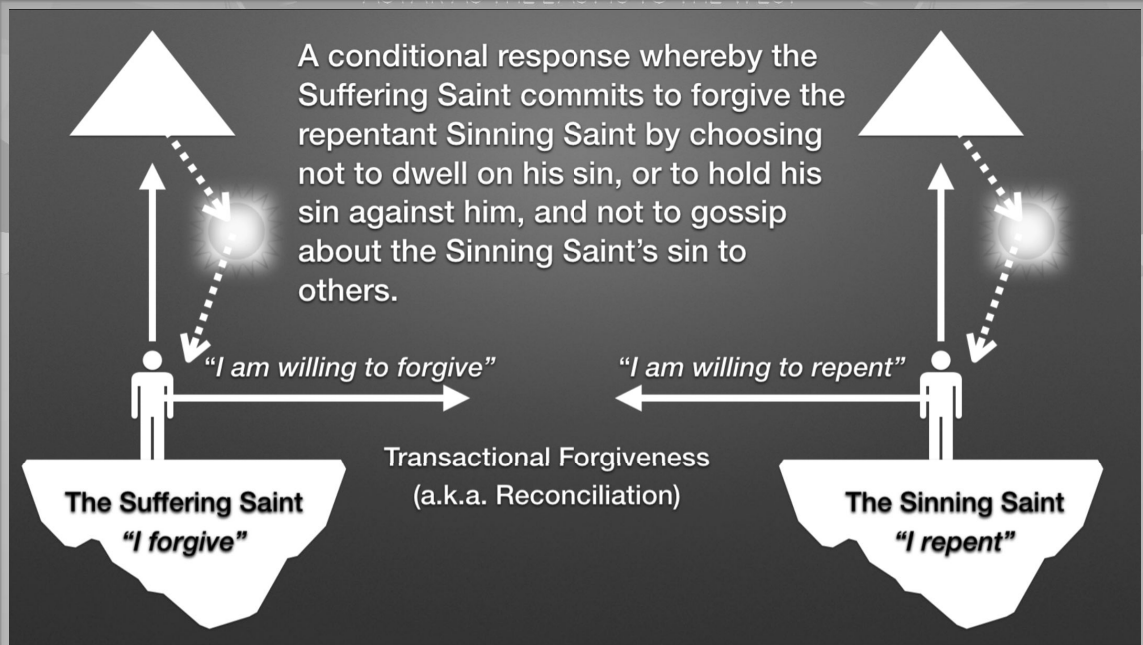
(Sessions Four - Eight)

SESSION 4 - CHRIST-CENTERED ATTITUDE OF RECONCILIATION

Introduction: Luke 17:1-3

FORGIVENESS

AS FAR AS THE EAST IS TO THE WEST



Notes:

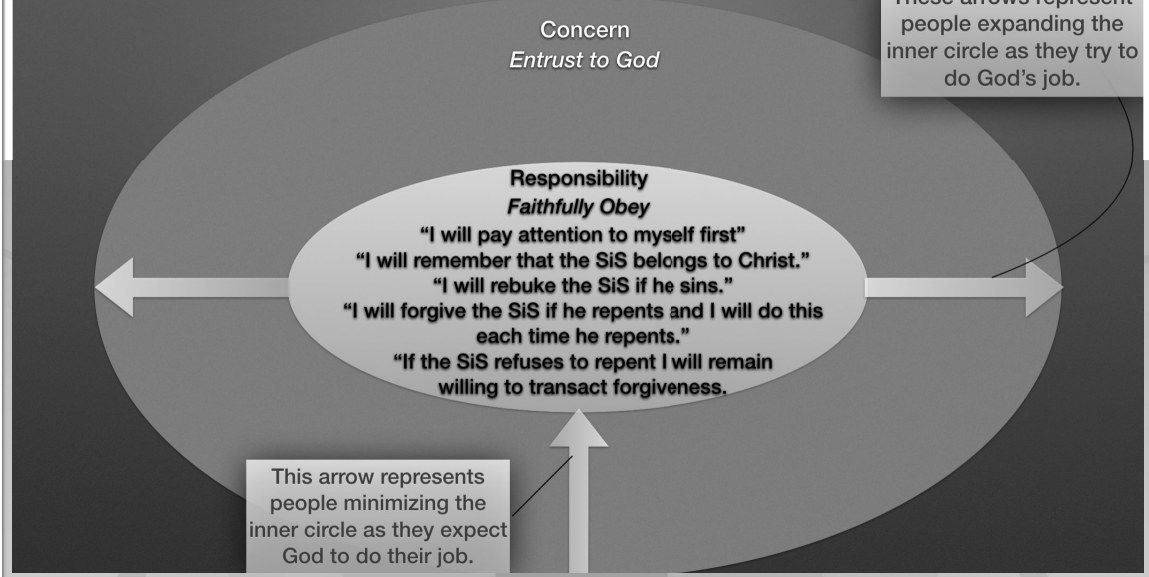
JESUS' OUTLINE FOR TRANSACTIONAL FORGIVENESS	LUKE 17:3	ACRONYM "I SURF"	S*, SIS**, SUS***
YOURSELVES	Pay attention to <u>yourself</u> s	I	S, SUS
SIN	If your brother <u>sins</u>	S	SIS
REBUKE	<u>rebuke</u> him	U****	S, SUS
REPENT	if he <u>repents</u>	R	SIS
FORGIVE	<u>forgive</u> him	F	S, SUS
*S = SAINT **SIS = SINNING SAINT ***SUS = SUFFERING SAINT		****U = UNDERSTANDING	

The "I" of "I SURF" - Pay attention to yourselves (Luke 17:3)

1. I will pay attention to myself first.
2. I will remember that the Sinning Saint belongs to Christ.
3. I will rebuke the Sinning Saint if he sins.
4. I will forgive the Sinning Saint if he repents and I will do this each time he repents.
5. If the Sinning Saint refuses to repent I will maintain an attitude of willingness to transact forgiveness.

Notes:

Circle of Responsibility



FORGIVENESS

AS FAR AS THE EAST IS TO THE WEST

Two-Reality Rejection Chart

	Seen Reality (R #1)	Unseen Reality (R #2)
Psalm 27:10 <i>For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.</i>	<i>For my father and my mother have forsaken me,</i>	<i>but the Lord will take me in.</i>
		Control
John 16:32 <i>Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.</i>	<i>Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone.</i>	<i>Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.</i>
		Control

The "S" of "I SURF" - *If your brother sins/sins against you* (Luke 17:3-4)

1. Luke 17:3 identified Transactional Forgiveness as Familial.

Notes:

2. The Sinning Saint sins against the Saint: This is sinning general.

Notes:

3. The Sinning Saint is also described as sinning specifically against the Suffering Saint.

Notes:

The "U" of "I SURF" - *Rebuke him* (Luke 17:3-4)

1. In a tentative rebuke the Saint or Suffering Saint will approach the Sinning Saint in an understanding way.

Notes:

2. Oftentimes, at the transactional level of forgiveness it will be necessary for other peacemakers to be involved in the process of reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-17; Philippians 4:2-3).

Notes:

3. Peacemakers should approach Saints (*either Sinning or Suffering*) according to their greatest need.

Notes:

Helping the Suffering Saint Rebuke the Sinning Saint in an Understanding Way

1. Encourage the Suffering Saint to **go to** the Sinning Saint (Matthew 5:22-23).

Notes:

2. Help the Suffering Saint envelop the **characteristics** of Christ (Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Notes:

3. Help the Suffering Saint keep **restoration** as the goal.

Notes:

Helping the Sinning Saint

1. Help the Sinning Saint by helping him understand biblical **confession** and **repentance**.

Notes:

The "R" of "I SURF" - *If he repents* (Luke 17:3)

What are the responsibilities of the Sinning Saint?

1. **Confess** his sin to God (1 John 1:9).

Notes:

2. **Repent** of his sin towards God and towards the Suffering Saint.

Notes:

3. **Count on** forgiveness from God (Romans 8:1; 1 John 1:9).

Notes:

4. Be **controlled** by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18, cf. Colossians 3:16; Galatians 5:16).

Notes:

5. **Count on** that control by walking by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:1-9; 1 John 5:1-15).

Notes:

What Happens if the Sinning Saint is Not Willing to Repent?

1. The Suffering Saint must remain **willing** to transact forgiveness with the Sinning Saint.
2. The Suffering Saint must focus on the principles of **Attitudinal Forgiveness**.
3. The Suffering Saint must follow Jesus' teaching in **Matthew 18:15-20**.

What Happens if the Sinning Saint is Not Willing to Repent?

1. The Suffering Saint must remain **willing** to transact forgiveness with the Sinning Saint.
2. The Suffering Saint must focus on the principles of **Attitudinal Forgiveness**.
3. The Suffering Saint must follow Jesus' teaching in **Matthew 18:15-20**.

The "F" of "I SURF" - *Forgive him* (Luke 17:3, 4)

1. Forgiveness hinders the work of the enemy and promotes the work of **progressive** sanctification (Ephesians 2:1-3, cf. 4:26-27; Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:6-9; James 1:2-4).

Notes:

2. The Suffering Saint must forgive the Sinning Saint based on his **word** (Luke 17:4, 5).

Notes:

3. The Suffering Saint is **commanded** to forgive the Sinning Saint (Luke 17:7-10).

Notes:

4. God provides the **grace** necessary for the Suffering Christian to accomplish this task (Hebrews 4:16).

Notes:

5. Transactional Forgiveness is a supernatural act that is **synergistic**.

Notes:

6. Transactional Forgiveness **completes** the reconciliation process.

Notes:

What Promises Does the Suffering Saint Need to Uphold?

1. I promise not to dwell upon the Sinning Saint's sin to myself.
2. I promise that I will not use the Sinning Saint's sin against him.
3. I promise that I will not slander the Sinning Saint in my conversations with others.

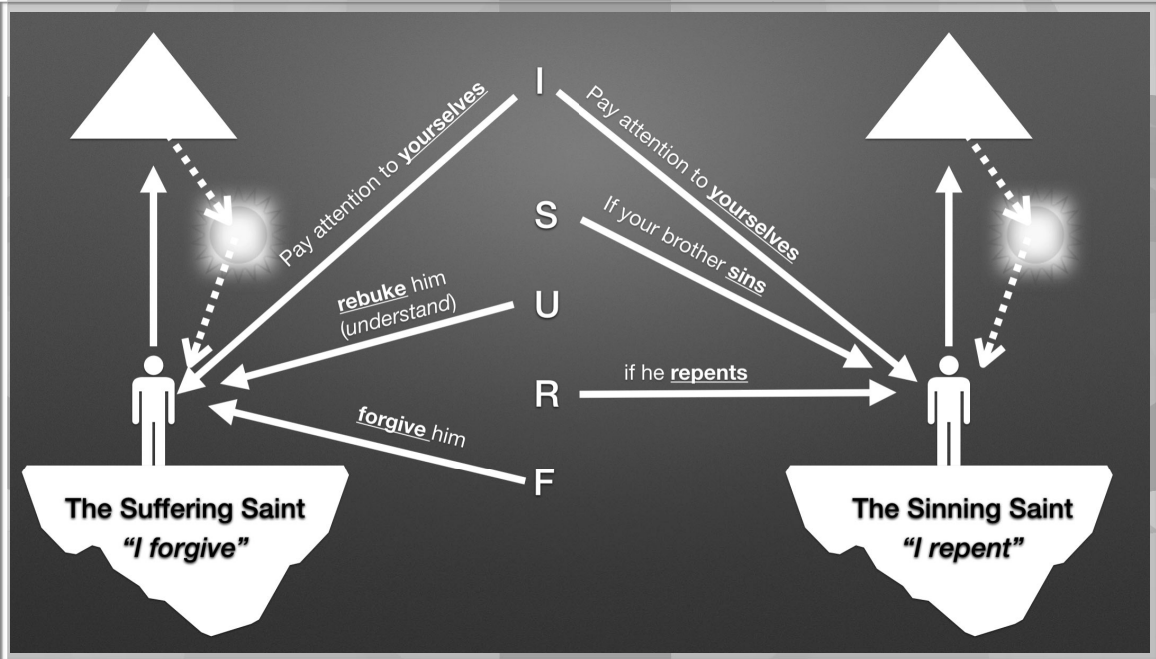
Notes:

What Happens if the Suffering Saint is Not Willing to Forgive?

1. At that point the Suffering Saint becomes the Sinning Saint.
2. Peacemakers will need to help the Suffering/Sinning Saint implement the principles of "I" "SURF."

Make the Connection ("I SURF")

1. At any given moment of life you will identify as a Suffering Saint or Sinning Saint.
2. Both the Suffering Saint and Sinning Saint have responsibilities to fulfill if forgiveness is to be transacted between unreconciled Saints.
3. Biblical repentance on behalf of the Sinning Saint must always precede Transactional Forgiveness.
4. Transactional Forgiveness is horizontal in its scope and it takes place between a Suffering Saint and a Sinning Saint.



PSALM103.12

Notes:

SESSION 5 - CHRIST-CENTERED
ATTITUDE OF FAITH IN GOD'S
PROVISION



PSALM103:12

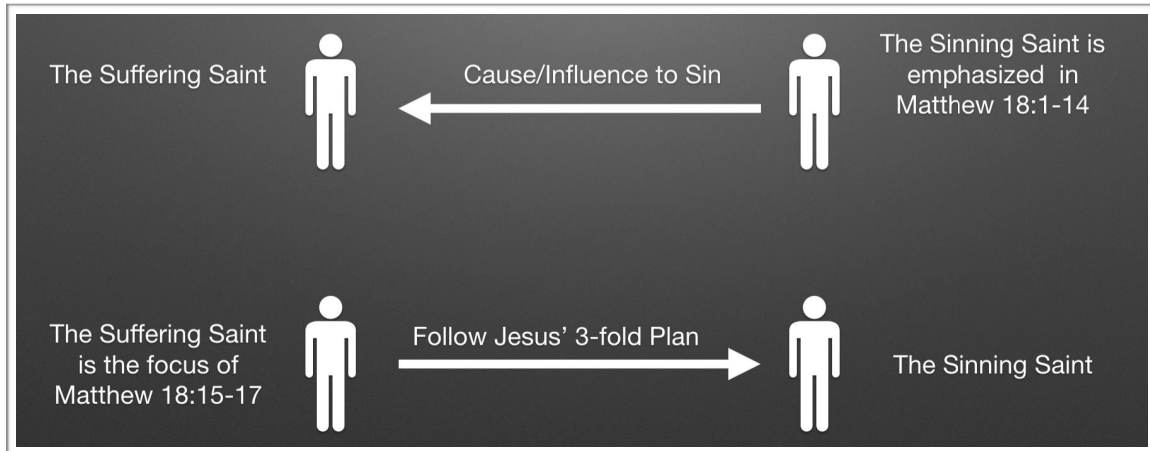
Notes:

Introductory Matters

1. Most Evangelical churches today refer to Matthew 18:15-17 as the process of Church discipline.
2. Jesus is teaching his disciples about the importance of reconciliation.



3. Jesus is the highest authority in heaven and on earth.
4. The prayers of the Saints in local gatherings will be heard as long as their prayers for the Sinning Saint align with the prayers of the Head of the Church.
5. Jesus is present with his Saints as they carry out what many Evangelicals describe as Church Discipline (Matthew 18:20).
6. The emphasis of the passage switches from the Sinning Saint (*one who causes Jesus' little ones to sin*) (Matthew 18:1-14) to focusing on the Suffering Saint (*the disciple who has been sinned*



7. The action plan in Matthew 18:15-17 may be described as **household rules** for dealing with conflict.
8. The Suffering Saint in conflict with a Sinning Saint will glorify God by living out Jesus' **three-fold** action plan.
9. Matthew 18:15-17 involves three different levels of **confrontation**.
 - ▶ Action Plan One: P **ersonal** Confrontation (Matthew 18:15)
 - ▶ Action Plan Two: P **eachmakers** Confrontation (Matthew 18:16)
 - ▶ Action Plan Three: P **ublic** Confrontation (Matthew 18:17)

Action Plan One: P ersonal Confrontation (Matthew 18:15)

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone (Matthew 18:15).

1. The Suffering Saint must go to the Sinning Saint **alone**.
2. The **reason** Jesus provides for going is depicted by the phrase, **against you**.
3. The Suffering Saint needs to take the **initiative** to go.
4. At this level of confrontation, **sin** has affected God, the Suffering Saint, and the Sinning Saint.
5. Both the Suffering Saint and Sinning Saint are responsible to God for different **tasks**.

TASKS OF THE SUFFERING SAINT	TASKS OF THE SINNING SAINT
<i>“tell him his fault” (Matthew 18:15)</i>	Listen to the Suffering Saint*
Go with the intention of convincing and convicting	Confess his sin to God
Uphold a Christ-like attitude	Uphold a Christ-like attitude
Forgive the Sinning Saint if he repents	Repent of his sin
* HEAR/LISTEN WITH THE PURPOSE OF OBEYING	

Notes:

6. Repentance, forgiveness, and restoration to fellowship are the desired **outcomes** for personal confrontation.

If he listens to you, you have gained your brother (Matthew 18:15).

Action Plan Two: P eacemakers Confrontation (Matthew 18:16)

But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by evidence of two or three witnesses (Matthew 18:16).

MATTHEW 6:14-15	MARK 11:25	LUKE 17:3-4	MATTHEW 18:15-17
Attitudinal Forgiveness	Attitudinal Forgiveness	Transactional Forgiveness	Transactional Forgiveness
Circle of Responsibility	Circle of Responsibility	Circle of Concern	Circle of Concern
Release the Sinning Saint to God in Prayer	Release the Sinning Saint to God in Prayer	Forgive the repenting Sinning Saint	Release the Sinning Saint to God
I will forgive from my heart	I will forgive from my heart	I am willing to Transact Forgiveness by forgiving the repenting Sinning Saint	I am willing to Transact Forgiveness by forgiving the repenting Sinning Saint
* REMEMBER THAT THIS SEMINAR IS LOOKING AT ATTITUDINAL AND TRANSACTIONAL FORGIVENESS THROUGH THE LENS OF THE SUFFERING SAINT			

1. The second action plan requires that the Suffering Saint take **others** with him to the unrepenting Sinning Saint.
2. If the Sinning Saint repents of his sin, then the brother is **won over**, forgiveness granted, and he is welcomed into the church.
3. The Suffering Saint does not drop out of the process by handing the Sinning Saint over to the **leadership** of the church.
4. The suffering Saint remains **involved** as he takes two or three others with him to confront the Sinning Saint of his sin.
5. The group of witnesses are members of the **same** household of faith.
6. They must be those who observe the sin and consider it important enough to **confront**.
7. Although it is not stated in this passage, these **witnesses** should be wise in the way of Christ, full of integrity, and possess a good reputation within the community of Christ.
8. If the Sinning Saint continues in his rebellion, the peacemakers and the Suffering Saint will bring the charges to the local church **assembly**.

Action Plan Three: Public Confrontation (Matthew 18:17)

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 tax collector (Matthew 18:17).

1. The third action plan calls for the Suffering Saint and the witnesses to bring the matter to the **Local Congregation**.
2. The plan has two possible **outcomes**.
 - ▶ The first **outcome** is **positive**.
 - ▶ The purpose of the increased pressure from the church still has as its aim the restoration of the **Sinning Saint**.
 - ▶ The second **outcome** is **negative**.
 - ▶ Jesus commands his disciples to make the Sinning Saint's sin **known** to the church.
 - ▶ The role of the church is to come alongside the Suffering Saint to convince the Sinning Saint to **listen** and **repent**.
 - ▶ If the Sinning Saint refuses to listen and repent, then Jesus provides more **details** for his church.
3. The plan involves **individual** and **public** responsibilities.
 - ▶ The Suffering Saint who began the process of loving confrontation has the **responsibility** to treat the Sinning Saints a Gentile and Tax Collector.
 - ▶ The church is called to follow the pattern of the **Old Testament** and cut the person off from God's gathered disciples (Genesis 17:14; Exodus 12:15, 19; 30:33, 39).

Summary of Jesus' 3-Fold Action Plan



Remember the Goal of "Winning" the Sinning Saint is Restoration!



FIRM FOUNDATION

MATTHEW 7:24-27

PART 2 : HINDRANCES TO ATTITUDINAL FORGIVENESS

To fortify Christ's teaching on attitudinal forgiveness, Christians must learn to practice discernment in the midst of unbiblical forgiveness issues. This section focuses on three unbiblical teachings that may hinder attitudinal forgiveness from taking place. In addition to identifying these hindrances, these sections will also provide biblical teaching as it relates to the issue of attitudinal forgiveness.

SESSION 6 - 8: FORGIVING GOD,
FORGETTING THE SINS OF OTHERS,
AND FORGIVING YOURSELF

Hindrances to Attitudinal Forgiveness



PSALM103:12

Notes:

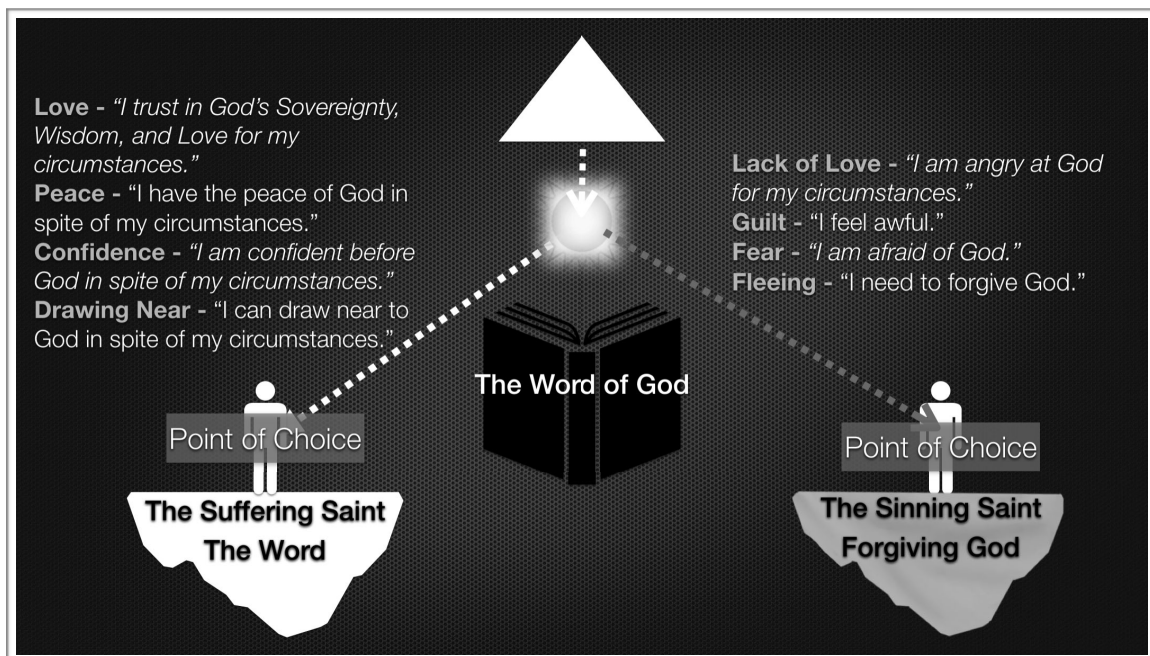
SESSION 6 - FORGIVING GOD

Introduction: "A Jewish Tailor"

What do we know about a Suffering Saint who has come to a place where he feels the need to forgive God?

1. The Suffering Saint is in a difficult **situation**.
2. The situation can influence the Suffering Saint's **thinking**.
3. Ungodly **influences** come in the form of interpreting the situation unbiblically.
4. Forgiving God is usually the **byproduct** of dealing with anger with a lack of love towards God and others.

"Our anger is our whole-personed active response of negative moral judgment against perceived evil" (Dr. Robert Jones)



A. Forgiving God is Unnecessary because it is an Affront to God

Attitudinal Forgiveness

"The unconditional and personal heart response to God whereby the Suffering Saint commits the Sinning Saint to God's judgment, guards his own heart against walking in the flesh, and is willing to reconcile if one repents."

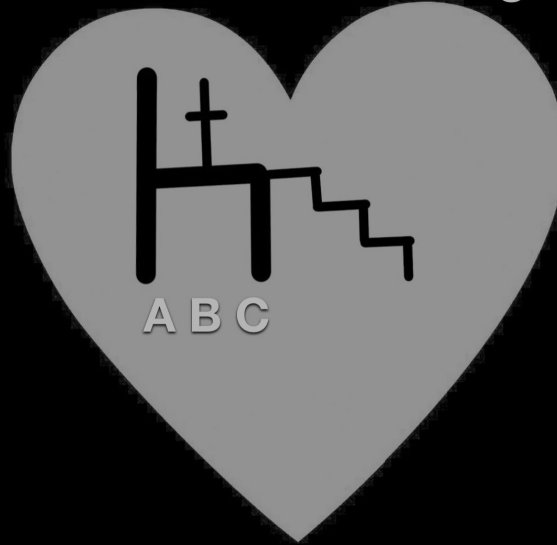
The Suffering Saint is never God.

1. Attitudinal forgiveness involves the Suffering Saint's unconditional and personal heart response to God.
2. The sufferer is always responsible to maintain a godly attitude toward his offender as he communes with God.
3. In most cases where forgiving God is concerned, the situation is the problem rather than the Sinning Saint.
4. The Scriptures reveal that God is sinless (John 8:46; Romans 5:21, 8:3; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 3:5; 1 Peter 2:22).
5. Since God is sinless, the Suffering Saint is never permitted to "forgive God" (Job 40:32, Job 38-41, Job 42:6).

The Sinning Saint is under God's Judgment.

1. The moment a Suffering Saint accuses God of wrongdoing he becomes a Sinning Saint.
2. Rather than believing God to be the sovereign, wise, and good Judge over all circumstances, the Suffering Saint takes God's rightful place and dethrones God in his heart.
3. "We accuse God of not doing what (*action or inaction*) he should do, or not doing it in the way (*manner*) he should, or not doing it when (*timing*) he should. In short, we want what we want when we want it, and when God does not deliver, we judge him" (Dr. Robert Jones).

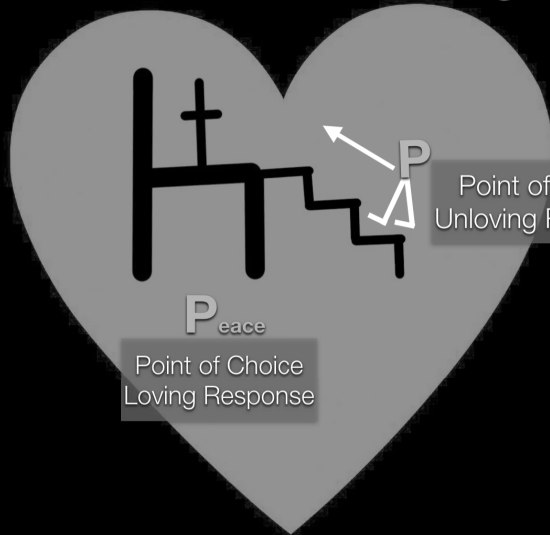
Throne-Staircase Diagram



FORGIVENESS

AS FAR AS THE EAST IS TO THE WEST

Throne-Staircase Diagram



Four Ways Saints May Be Held Captive to Unbiblical Thinking

1. First, a Suffering Saint may believe that since anger is an emotion given by God then he can be content with **directing** his anger towards God.
2. Second, the Suffering Saint may presume that God, in his omnipotence, could have **stopped** their present circumstances from occurring, but **chose** not to stop the hardship.
3. Third, because of the reality that God chose not to intervene, the Suffering Saint may be counseled to **vent** his anger at God.
4. Fourth, this downward spiral of thinking moves further away from God as the Suffering Saint **justifies** the solution to his problem as having to forgive God for not doing anything about the circumstances.

Responsibilities for the Suffering Saint

The Suffering Saint needs to guard his own heart.

1. The Suffering Saint, because of Christ's disarming work on the cross (Colossians 2:15), can **choose** to please God amid his situation by exalting God's Name, kingdom, and will above his own.
2. The Suffering Saint will win the spiritual battle by walking in the **Spirit** and **choosing** not to gratify the sinful desires of his heart (Galatians 5:16).
3. The battle must be won in the **heart**.
4. Thus, if the Suffering Saint submits to Christ in the midst of his sinful passions warring within his heart (James 4:1) and refuses to be enticed by the **inordinate** desire (James 1:14), then he will not sin against God.

Responsibilities of the Suffering Saint Who Becomes a Sinning Saint

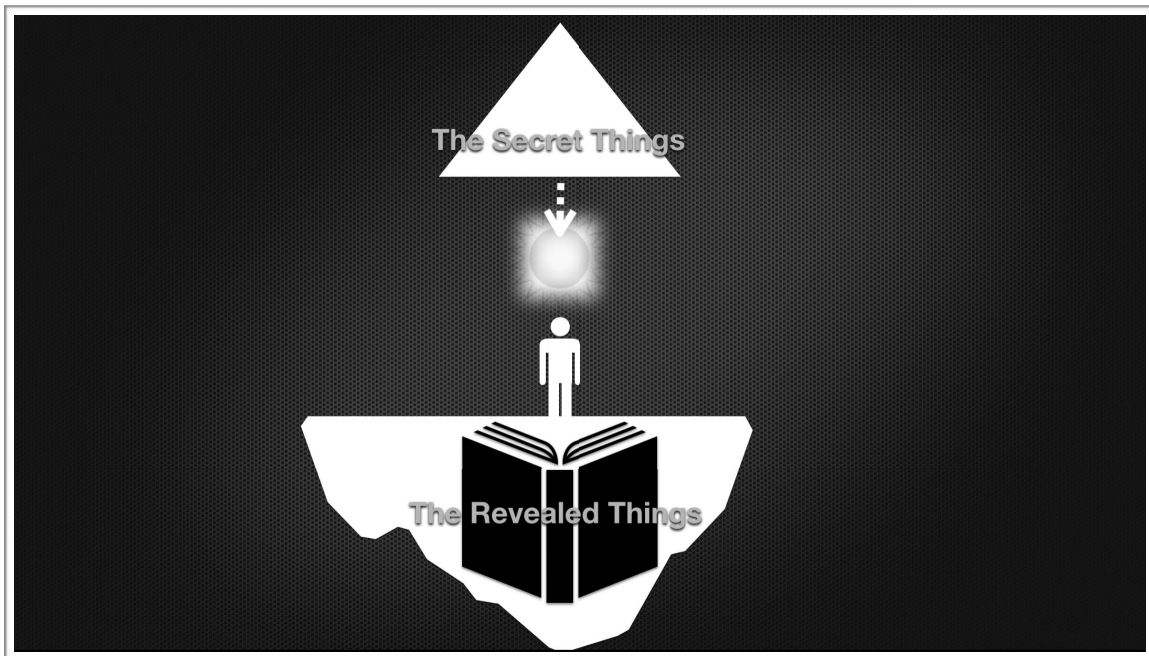
The Sinning Saint needs to repent.

1. If the Suffering Saint sins by giving control over to his flesh at the point of decision, he will need to confess his sin (1 John 1:9) and count on God's **forgiveness**.

2. A Saint will sin against God when his desire is not kept under the **lordship** of Christ.
3. What begins as a temptation from the situation becomes a lure that may lead to a downward spiral of **thinking**.
4. This thinking culminates in **blasphemous** behavior whereby the Sinning Saint *may think* he has authority to forgive God.
5. Yet, the Sinning Saint needs to **repent**.
6. In addition to repentance, he should want to be renewed and transformed in his thinking as he takes his sinful thoughts captive and makes those thoughts **obedient** to God's Word (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:5).

B. Forgiving God is Unnecessary because of God's Attributes

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29).



God is Sovereign, Wise, and Good.

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man, God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure through it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

PROMISES	ATTRIBUTES	REFERENCES
You are never alone in your trial	Sovereignty Goodness	Hebrews 4:14-15, cf. Isaiah 53:3-4
God will not tempt you beyond your ability	Sovereignty Wisdom	2 Corinthians 4:8-9
God will provide the way of escape	Sovereignty Wisdom	2 Corinthians 4:4
God is faithful	Goodness	Matthew 1:23
God will help you endure through the trial	Sovereignty Wisdom Goodness	Romans 8:28-29 Lamentations 3:22-23

Notes:

C. Forgiving God is Unnecessary because of the biblical Alternative

1. Biblical **lamenting** is the expression of one’s sorrow and grief to God.
2. Lamenting involves **perceiving** the difficult situation as it relates to the sovereign, wise, and good God.
3. It is necessary for the Suffering Saint to recognize not only God’s character, but it is also essential that he apprehends God’s greater **purpose** for the trial.
4. Romans 8:28 reveals God’s hidden **agenda** for Suffering Saints as they experience trials.

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose”

1. Since God is sovereign, wise, and good, the Suffering Saint can trust God with his secret purpose portrayed in Romans 8:28.
2. Biblical lamenting will take any thoughts captive that attack God’s character and decretive will.
3. If the Suffering Saint loses in the battle to take his thoughts captive, he will need to repent of his ongoing battle with sin (1 John 1:9).

The Suffering Saint’s Responsibilities in the Midst of a Difficult Trial

“But the things that are revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29).

1. The Suffering Saint is responsible for working with God to build his life upon the Words of Christ (Matthew 7:24-27).
2. Building on the Scriptures requires an understanding that the **good** in Romans 8:28 is equated with the phrase, ***“to be conformed to the image of his Son”*** (Romans 8:29).
3. The Suffering Saint must follow in the footsteps of the Second Adam.

Example of Biblical Lamenting

“Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father save me from this hour.’

But for this purpose I have come to this hour.

Father, glorify your name” (John 12:27-28)

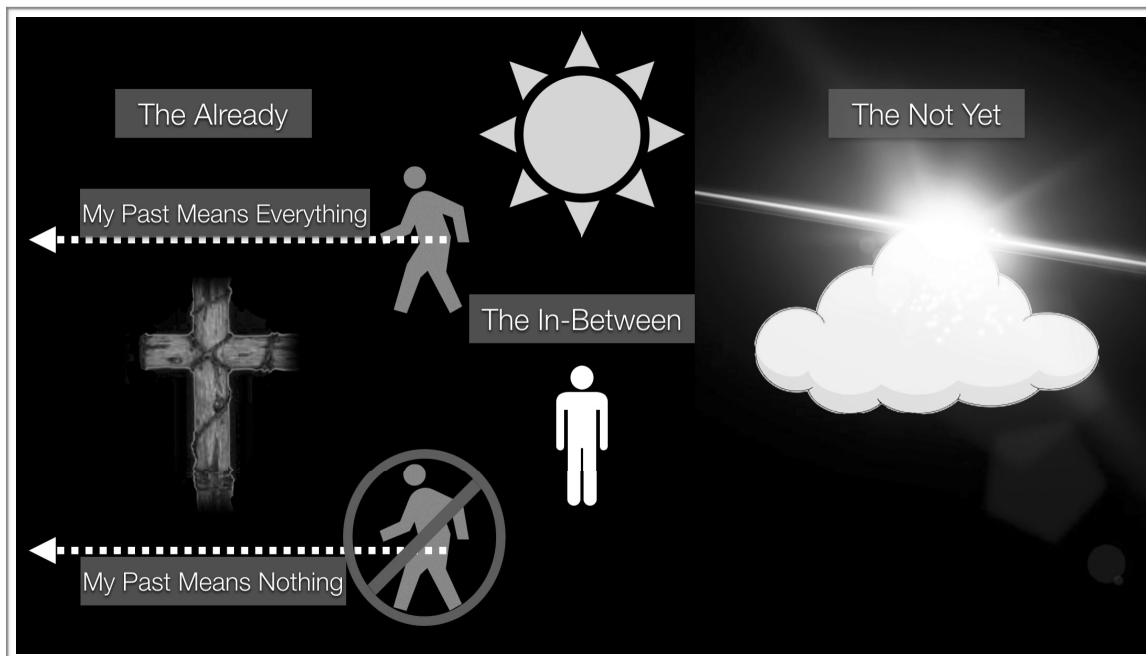
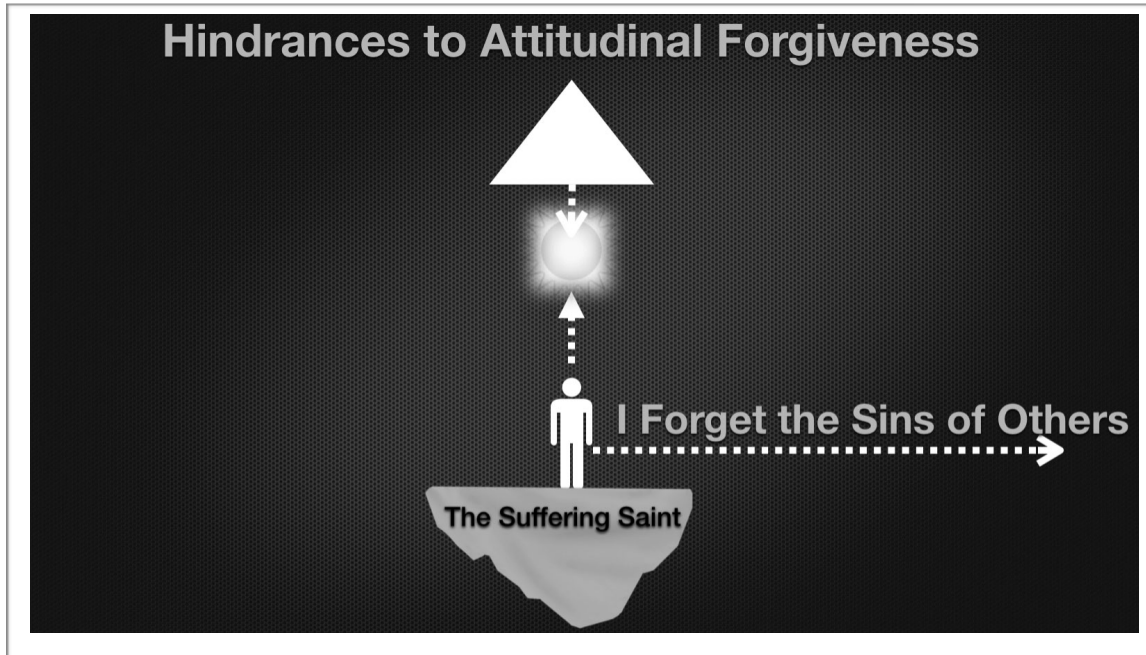
1. Jesus could trust his Father’s character and purposes.
2. Jesus was able to entrust himself to the Father because he knew the revealed Word of God.
3. Biblical lamenting also requires aligning one’s will to God’s will. Jesus demonstrated this principle in John 12:28:

“Father, glorify your name.”

4. Sometimes, because the Suffering Saint is human, he will have to ask God for help with **unbelief** (Mark 9:24).
5. The Suffering Saint must learn to “acknowledge God, in honest **faith** and **submission**” (Dr. Robert Jones).
6. This acknowledgement needs to include both **feelings** and **thoughts**.
7. A person’s thoughts and feelings toward God should not be **careless**, but instead their thoughts should be **reverent** in the manner that they pray to God.
8. Following the example of Christ in biblical lamenting will ultimately lead to the **volition** of obeying God.
9. John 12:28 confirms the Father’s **satisfaction** with his Son’s request to glorify his name:

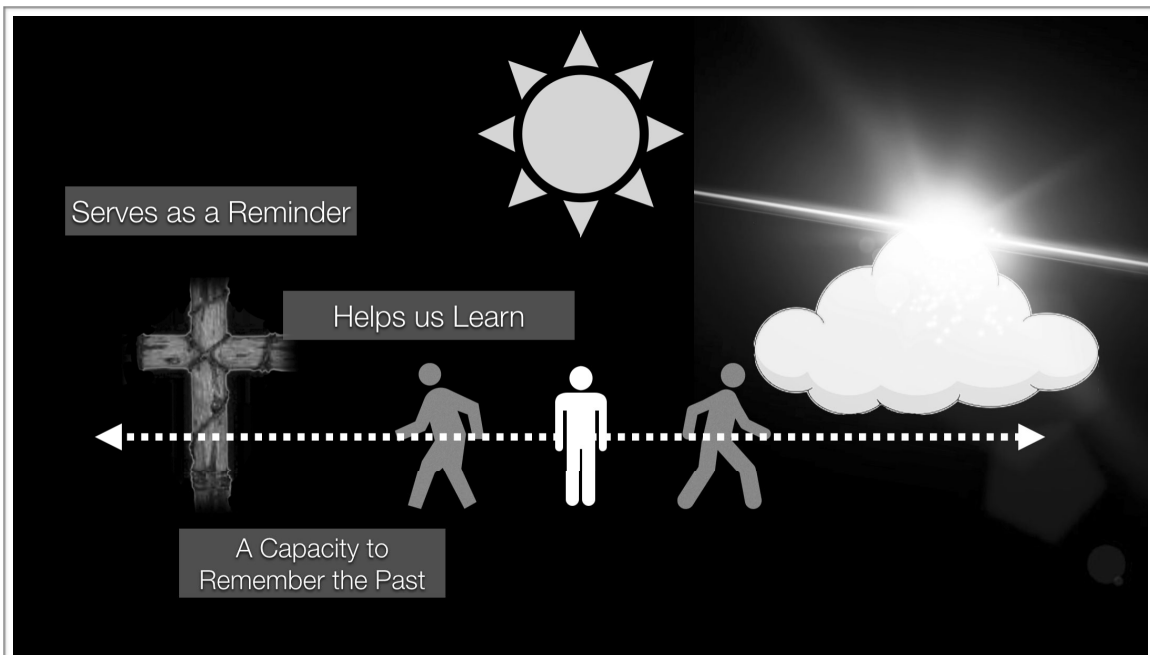
“Then a voice came from heaven: ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.’”
10. Suffering Saints going through a difficult trial can obey God in every **occasion** by glorifying the name of the Father.

SESSION 7 - FORGETTING THE SINS OF OTHERS



How does the past serve the Saint?

1. The past is an **instrument** God utilizes to help a person look more like Christ and less like his old self (Gal 2:20).
2. The past could also enable a Serving Saint to help the Suffering Saint see **himself** more clearly (Heb 3:13).
3. The past also functions to deepen **repentance** and heighten **thanksgiving**.
4. The past may also procure broader effectiveness when **ministering** to others (2 Cor 1:3-7).



Isaiah 43:24

I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake and I will not remember your sins.

Jeremiah 31:34

And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD.

For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Make The Connection

1. Forgetting the sins of others is unbiblical because of God's Person and God's promise.
2. God is omniscient.
3. God does not have amnesia, nor does he erase someone's memory, or even deny a person's sin.
4. In fact, he is unable to forget something.

Jay Adams

"The omniscient God who created and sustains the universe does not forget, but He can 'not remember.'"

Nancy DeMoss

"How can a God who knows everything forget anything?"

5. God is also omnipotent.
6. The Bible portrays God as both Almighty and the Sovereign Judge (Eccl 12:14; Matt 12:36-37). As such, all sin will be judged.

"And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13).

7. God's omnipotence in judgment requires that God does not forget the sins of others.

FORGET	REMEMBER
<i>Passive (cannot control)</i>	<i>Active (can control)</i>
Escaping Notice	Refusing to Call Past Events to Mind
No Control of What is Brought to Mind	Not Keeping Accounts
	Connected to the OT Concept of Covenant
Philippians 3:13 1 Timothy 1:12-15	Psalm 25:7 Isaiah 43:25 Jeremiah 31:34

The Concept of Covenant

1. The word "remember" in Isaiah 43:25 and Jeremiah 31:34 is connected to the Old Testament concept of covenant.
2. In these passages, God is promising to not remember the sins of his people.
3. When God makes a covenant promise, he promises not to treat a person as their sins deserve.
4. He also promises to cancel debt and remove guilt.
5. In addition, God promises to never bring up a person's guilt again or use it against a person.

God the Promise Keeper

1. Since it is impossible for God in his Person to forget sins, every sinful word and act committed against God will need to be punished (Eccl 12:14; Matt 12:36-37; 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Pet 4:17).
2. Without God's divine intervention, man would be without hope.
3. The past, present, and future sins of a Saint are remembered by God; however, they are remembered in such a way that they have been released by God because of Jesus' finished work on the cross in their behalf.

The Practicalities

1. Suffering Saints must remember that forgiveness is their duty.

and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him (Luke 17:4).

So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'" (Luke 17:10).

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5).

And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. (Luke 17:6).

2. Suffering Saints must remember that forgiveness involves a **three-fold** promise.
 - ▶ First, the Christian promises not to bring up the offender's sin to **himself**.
 - ▶ Second, the Christian promises not to talk about the offender's sin to **others**.
 - ▶ Third, the Christian promises not to bring up the offender's sin against **him**.
3. Suffering Saints must keep in mind that forgiveness is an **event** and a **process**.

Mark 11:25

"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

2 Corinthians 10:1-6

I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!—

2 I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh.

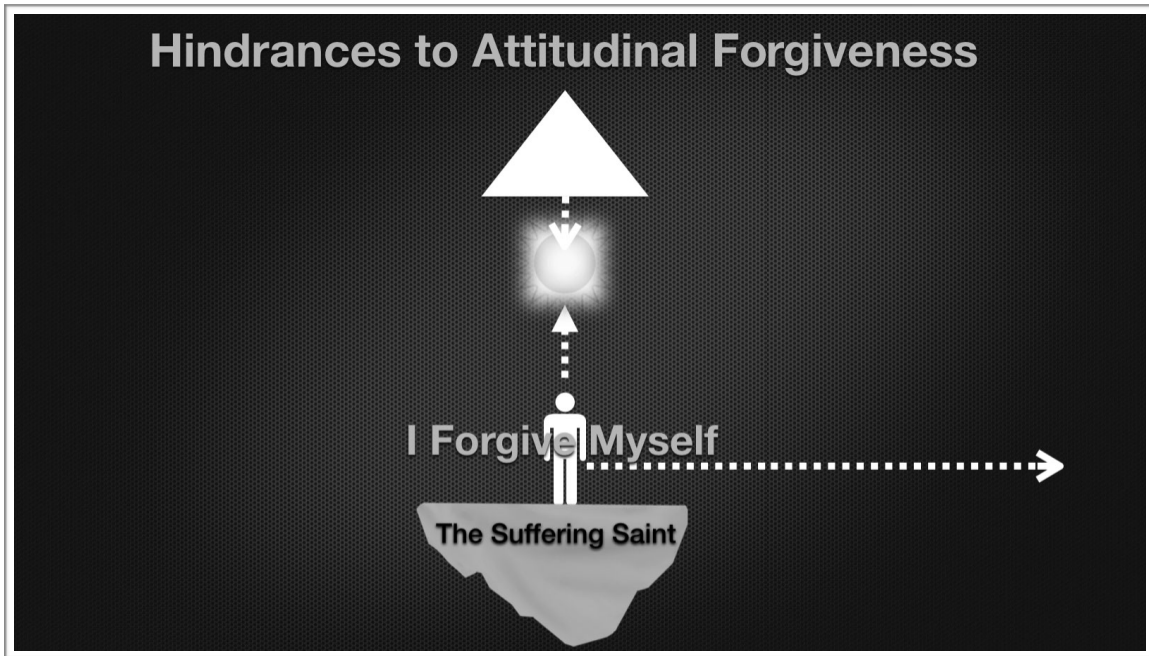
3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

6 being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

SESSION 8 - FORGIVING YOURSELF



The ABC's of Forgiving Yourself

1. By Whose Authority?

The Paralytic (Mark 2:1-12)

Notes:

2. By Whose B lood?

The P assover (Exodus 12)

Notes:

3. By Whose C onfession?

The P erpetrator and P riest (1 John 1:9)

Notes:

4. What is the **D** agnosis?

The P roblem (Dr. Robert Jones, *Forgiveness: I Just Can't Forgive Myself!*)

a. Is there an inability or unwillingness to grasp and **receive** God's forgiveness?

b. Can the person see or acknowledge the depth of his own sinful nature?

c. Is this person venting his regrets for failing to achieve a certain cherished desire?

d. Has this person ascended to the throne of judgment and declared himself to be his own judge?

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P O S T - S E M I N A R A S S E S S M E N T

Carefully read each of the following statements and circle the response that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement.

Strongly Disagree (SD)	Disagree (D)	Disagree Somewhat (DS)	Agree Somewhat (AS)	Agree (A)	Strongly Agree (SA)
1. Understanding forgiveness is primarily a theological task.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
2. I know the difference between attitudinal forgiveness and transactional forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
3. When I am sinned against, I need to release my <i>offender</i> to God's judgment.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
4. Relational peace between the Sinning Saint (a Christian who commits the sin) and the Suffering Saint (a Christian who is sinned against) can only occur if the Sinning Saint repents of his sin.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
5. The Scriptures teach that I can lose my salvation if I don't forgive my brother from my heart.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
6. I believe that I not only need to receive forgiveness from God, but that I also need forgiveness from my brothers and sisters in Christ as a daily provision.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
7. My primary motivation for forgiving others from my heart is for God's glory.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
8. If I am living to please God, then I will forgive others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
9. I am committed to a lifestyle confession and forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
10. It is wrong to partake of communion if I am unwilling to forgive someone who has sinned against me.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
11. I understand the difference between Parental and Judicial Forgiveness.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
12. I believe that I need to commit my offender's sin against me to God.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
13. I believe that my thoughts determine how I feel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA
14. I believe that it is my primary responsibility as a Suffering Christian (one who has been sinned against) to pay attention to myself first.	SD	D	DS	AS	A SA

Carefully read each of the following statements and circle the response that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement.

Strongly Disagree (SD)	Disagree (D)	Disagree Somewhat (DS)	Agree Somewhat (AS)	Agree (A)	Strongly Agree (SA)	
15. If I forgive my offender, then I should no longer talk about their sin to others.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. If I forgive my offender, then I should no longer dwell on that person's sin.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. Transactional forgiveness can only occur if certain conditions are met.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. Jesus said very little about how people should resolve interpersonal conflict.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. If I am unable to transact forgiveness with my offender (a Sinning Saint), then I no longer need to be involved in the process of Church Discipline portrayed in Matthew 18:15-20.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. Sometimes I need to forgive God for my circumstances.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. Forgiving God is justifiable under extreme situations.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. If I truly forgive someone, then I need to forget my offender's sins.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I believe that forgiving yourself is the key to moving on in difficult circumstances.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. Counsel that involves forgiving God, forgetting the sins of others, and forgiving yourself will not truly help a person become more like Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: <i>(List the last 4 digits of your phone number)</i>						

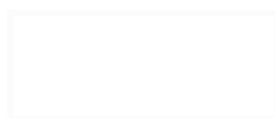
1. How has this seminar proved helpful to you?

2. What area of your personal life has been most challenged?

3. How has your view of biblical forgiveness changed from the start of the seminar?

4. True or False. I attended all the sessions on Friday evening and Saturday:

Please place this survey in the envelop and return it to Pastor Silva. Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.



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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A FORGIVENESS SEMINAR FOR MEMBERS AT OPEN DOOR COMMUNITY CHURCH, SHINGLETOWN, CALIFORNIA

Mathew Raymond Silva, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Stuart W. Scott

This project sought to develop a forgiveness seminar for members of Open Door Community Church in Shingletown, California. Chapter 1 presents the history and ministry context of Open Door Community Church and goals of this project. Chapter 2 utilizes four key passages from the synoptic gospels (Matt 6:14-15; Mark 11:25; Luke 17:3; Matt 18:15-17) to demonstrate a theological foundation for attitudinal forgiveness. Chapter 3 explains common hindrances to attitudinal forgiveness: forgiving God, forgetting the sins of others, and forgiving self. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, recounting the content and teaching methodology of the specific course curriculum. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on completion of certain goals. This project sought to develop Christians with a knowledge of attitudinal forgiveness so that they would desire to live out the teaching of Jesus in the midst of their interpersonal relationships within the discipleship community of saints, sinners, and sufferers.

VITA

Mathew Raymond Silva

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