

SESSION SIX: HOW TO FORGIVE

Statement...we end our study with the most difficult issue of all: how do we forgive? Where do we start? Who takes the 1st steps? What is the goal? Does it always look the same in every situation? Nobody is born with much talent for forgiving. We all learn from scratch and the learning is difficult.

IT TAKES TIME... forgiveness takes time and, in some cases, lots of time. We may wrestle with it for years, postpone it so long that we don't recall when we were hurt. The HATE HABIT is hard to break. The worse we are hurt, the longer it takes to forgive. Minor bruises heal quickly but deep scars fester. We may slide into forgiving without noticing when we started. We may wake up one day and find ourselves wishing that person well.

WITH PARTIAL UNDERSTANDING...we forgive with partial understanding. We won't know everything but if we know enough, we can get started. When we get hurt, we are HALF BLINDED in shock, unclear about WHAT HAPPENED or WHY IT OCCURRED. Our eyes may be partially opened to see a wrong-doer in a new light, what influenced them. Coming to know our enemies, we bring them down to size. When we are first hurt, we draw a DISTORTED PICTURE of the person-twice as evil, and ROTTEN TO THE CORE.

WE FORGIVE IN CONFUSION...there is an element of MYSTERY/CONFUSION in forgiveness. The confusion isn't all our fault. The MATERIAL WE WORK WITH is often mirky and we may be unclear who did WHAT TO WHOM? To expect 2 PEOPLE CAUGHT IN MUTUAL HATE to sort out the pain is like asking a CHILD to calculate the NATIONAL DEBT. We must grope into forgiving through hurt feelings.

LEFT-OVER ANGER...not all forgiveness ends in happy endings. We forgive with left-over anger. It can't be helped. But anger/forgiveness can live together in the same heart. You aren't a FORGIVING FAILURE just because you still feel angry. If we don't GET ANGRY when bad things happen, we have more SERIOUS PROBLEM than anger.

WE FORGIVE WHAT THEY DID...we forgive ACTIONS, what people said/did; we can't forgive them FOR WHAT THEY ARE. We don't forgive them for failing to be ALL WE WANTED/EXPECTED THEM TO BE.