A Weekend of Forgiveness Conference



C.S. Lewis was spot on when he said, "Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive (*Mere Christianity*)." Forgiveness makes for a great theme in a movie but shows up in the most painful scenes of our lives. That's why so many Christians have a love-hate relationship with forgiveness.

Yet, forgiveness is the central message of the gospel. It is literally at the core of our Christian faith. Being skittish regarding the central tenet of one's faith has a way of stifling spiritual growth. The *Weekend of Forgiveness* conference engages our fears with hope as we honestly explore what forgiveness does/doesn't mean.

Imagine the impact if everyone in your church trusted forgiveness, embraced the emotional freedom of accepting forgiveness, experienced the liberty of forgiving others, and allowed wise trust (rooted in the Proverbs) to guide their restoration efforts after forgiveness. That's the fruit a *Weekend of Forgiveness* conference seeks to cultivate.

Session One: Refuting Our Fears about Forgiveness. If you haven't forgotten, you haven't forgiven. If you're still hurt, you're bitter. If you're not acting like nothing happened, you're less than godly. These are the messages about forgiveness that create fear. Even if we think they're false, but we can't refute them, they haunt us. In session one, we put these fears into words, draw them into the light of God's Word, and thereby de-haunt the refuge of forgiveness God wants to use to minister to our most painful experiences.

Session Two: Embracing Forgiveness When Guilt or Shame Are Thick. Guilt and shame are two of the most crippling emotions. Guilt and shame choke the authenticity of Christian friendships that God intends to fuel discipleship. Guilt and shame cause us to pull back from the plans God has for our lives. In session two, we learn to embrace forgiveness to absolve a plaguing sense of condemnation and refute the notion we're unacceptable. We learn to trust God as the just Judge who pardons and the loving Father who welcomes us into his family.

Session Three: Granting Forgiveness and Embracing Freedom from Past Pain. Simply put, forgiveness allows us to express hurt as hurt rather than hurt as anger. Forgiveness is canceling a debt. Failing to forgive keeps us emotionally tethered to our pain. After forgiveness, everything the Bible teaches about wise trust (Proverbs on relating to fools) helps us gauge how to proceed in restoration. In session three, we begin to see that forgiving others is something God wants *for* us as much as he wants it *from* us.

Optional: Q&A – Often churches add a Question-and-Answer time to these three sessions. It is wonderful to have pastors or other church leaders participate in this as a panel discussion. Having the voice of church leaders in the Q&A can be an effective way to help church members process and apply what they have learned.

Optional: Sunday Sermon or Final Session – *Scales, Planks, Dogs, and Pigs (Matthew 7:1-6).* In these verses, Jesus walks us through increasingly personal and increasingly painful conflicts. Jesus provides guidance on how to respond based on the closeness of the relationship, the impact of someone's sin, and the person's disposition toward their sin. Walking through this passage provides an excellent framework for resolving interpersonal conflict and resolves many (maybe most) of our fears about forgiveness.

The *Weekend of Forgiveness* conference is designed to be easy for your church to host and provides members with a way to think wisely about forgiveness, relationships, hurt, and restoration. If your church is interested in hosting this conference, please visit www.bradhambrick.com/events to identify dates that may be available and to download my FAQ sheet for scheduling external events.