

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership
Study Guide

FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

LESSON 2: HEALING HURTS

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Forgiveness and Reconciliation. It can be difficult to accept God's forgiveness in our lives and extend forgiveness to others. Forgiving others goes against our natural inclination. But as we allow God to change our hearts and minds, we can experience reconciliation with God and with one another. This module explores the Biblical foundations of forgiveness, the process required for reconciliation, and how to promote living at peace with one another. It also examines forgiveness as it may be required between individuals or members of a community.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

LESSON 2: HEALING HURTS

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

This lesson will examine how the Christian should respond to sins committed against them. It will identify how sin's destructive nature impacts our relationships with others, and the necessary stages of healing.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

All of us have aspects of our past that we would rather forget. For some of us, this includes things done to us, and for others it is things we have done ourselves. This lesson explores how to seek healing for the emotional wounds in our lives. It may trigger strong emotions or memories and you may need time to process these thoughts. It is important to remember that God does not want us to continually suffer what has been left in the past, and that there is hope and healing to be found in Jesus. God is sufficient for every need – including emotional ones! When we move from a place of brokenness and despair into hope and healing, God is glorified! It is worth the pain of the healing process to be free of the past and living victoriously in Jesus.

GETTING STARTED

1. Have you ever met someone who recovered from a life situation you thought would be impossible? What was their situation and what is their life like now?

2. Are you inclined to talk about a past hurt, or keep it inside? Which do you think is healthier? Can either of these methods lead to true healing, or neither of them?



STUDY

❖ **HOW WE HURT:** We live in a world where each of us has hurts. We come to God with brokenness, rejection, inadequacy and trauma; from all these things God longs to give us peace and set us free. Our burdens and hurts can even bring us into closer relationship with Him. However, if we do not give these over to Him, our hurts can destroy us.

- Emotional hurts lie deep within us. They can be concealed, but they won't be healed unless they are properly acknowledged, and God is sought in the healing process.
- God created us and knows everything about us. Read the following verses that reflect on the nature of spiritual and emotional wounds and God's response to them, and write them down in your own words:

Psalm 147:2-3	
Psalm 34:17-20	
Jeremiah 30:17	
Proverbs 18:14	
1 Peter 5:10	

- An important step in forgiving others and being reconciled to them is to seek healing for our own spiritual wounds. As we can see from the previous verses, God desires to heal us. We must open ourselves to Him in order to find peace.

❖ **THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF SIN:** The results of sin can be damaging (physically, mentally, and emotionally). Sin is at the root of actions that cause harm.

- What hurtful experiences might a person have in life? List all that you can think of. (for instance: rejection, violence, poverty, shame)



- Every person is affected by negative things that are said to them and done to them, to different degrees. These wounds may resurface as emotional or even physical ailments. What problems can you list that may have hurtful experiences as their cause? (for instance: depression, anger, self-harm, abusing others)

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- Two people can undergo the same life circumstances with very different results. We cannot know the effect sins (harmful actions) will have on us, but we do know they always bring with them death and destruction. Sin breaks wholeness. Forgiveness stops sin from hurting us further, but we must understand the destructive power of sin in order to forgive. Sin breaks God’s heart – it should break ours also!
- What do the following verses say about the destructive power of sin in our life?

Romans 6:23	
Isaiah 59:2	
James 1:15	
Ephesians 2:1-10	

- What do the previous verses say is the result of sin? Is it the result of sin every time?

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- Consider sin in a relationship. What dies or ends when there is sin?

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- What other realities or possibilities 'die' as a result of sin?

- What can we hope in? What power does God have over death, and how did He demonstrate it to us?

❖ **THE DANGER OF UNHEALED WOUNDS:** Pain from past hurts can affect our daily lives in ways we are not even aware of. Just as we would care for a physical wound, we must be attentive to our emotional wounds. If left unhealed, bitterness and anger can infect them, poisoning our lives until we are unable to experience joy, love, and kindness.

- **Wounds affect the way we think:** What our mind constantly replays can actually alter the way our brain works. As we ruminate on these hurts, mental pathways become entrenched and it can become difficult to think any other way. What we have been called by others in the past, or the way we have been treated, changes our self-identity. When our thought patterns grow more and more destructive, we can begin to hate ourselves and those around us, making it impossible to live a joyful life.
- **Wounds affect the choices we make:** When we have experienced hardships and traumas, we may make choices to avoid our fears rather than pursue good things. When people have been critical about our choices in the past, it may be difficult to make confident decisions in the future.
- **Wounds affect our ability to have quality relationships:** Trust is essential in every relationship. Past wounds can prevent us from trusting people in the future. We may even expect destructive or abusive behaviour from them . It may be difficult to allow someone to love us when we feel unlovable.
- **Wounds affect our emotional balance:** A person who has emotional balance will feel both highs and lows throughout the day, but none of these emotions will be out of control or keep them from accomplishing goals. Someone who is not balanced may not be able to move on from sadness, anger, or an addiction while seeking pleasure.
- **Wounds affect our fellowship with God:** Some wounds will impair our ability to trust, love, and follow God. The way we perceive God can be altered by past hurts. If we have



had a father who hurt us, it may be difficult to trust our heavenly Father. Past hurts inflicted by 'spiritual' people may colour how we perceive the Christian faith and may cause us confusion about the truth.

- Think about the fact that all of us have unseen emotional wounds that cause us pain long after the incident happened. What evidences do you see in your community that many people are wounded and in need of healing?

❖ **THE STAGES OF HEALING:** God longs to heal us and restore our peace. Psalm 71:20 says, “you who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again.” We can trust God to heal us, but we must allow Him to enter the dark places of our inner world.

A physical wound heals when there is restoration of infected tissue with live healthy tissue. Just like physical wounds, spiritual or emotional wounds require healing. These wounds can be very painful, and may require removal of that which aggravates them (resentment, hatred, blame, grief), and replaced with living tissue (love, joy, peace). Healing requires much prayer, spiritual discipline and willingness to face the past and trust God for the future. Going through the stages of healing is important, and best done alongside others or within community.

- **Identify:** First we must try to correctly identify or name the wound. What exactly has hurt us? This can be difficult because we often repress unpleasant memories. It is a lie that simply not thinking about the hurt will make it go away. We must not minimize or excuse the offence, but clearly name the sin that occurred.
 - o It may take some time to admit what happened, but speaking about it out loud with a trusted friend can help us see things accurately.
 - o We must identify a guilty person or persons in order to extend forgiveness.
 - o Remember that God desires to heal you! Hold tightly to His promises. God will walk with you through your healing process.
 - Read the following verses and summarize what God says to you about the hope you have for healing: Psalm 34:18, Psalm 147:3, Jeremiah 17:14, Isaiah 41:10



- **Grieve:** This is the normal emotional response to wounds, hurts or losses. When we allow ourselves to mourn what could otherwise have been, and to feel sorrow over the sin that has occurred, we enter a period of grieving. It may begin right after a trauma has occurred or many years later, but it is important to realize it is a temporary state. Grief is a healthy and necessary step in the healing process.
 - **Feel:** Allow yourself emotional response to the event. It may include anger, sorrow, self-pity, frustration, fear etc., and sometimes many tears.
 - **Experience:** You may experience anxiety, confusion, denial, shock, loss of appetite or sleep, inability to control emotions or carry out everyday tasks during a time of intense grieving.
 - **Take Care:** It is important in the grief process to take care of yourself; get enough sleep, eat properly, and ensure that you spend time with those you love. Do not isolate yourself from others because it will make grief worse.
 - **Hope:** In your process of grieving, do not lose hope! Things will never be the way they once were, but life can be full of joy and meaningful again! Continually look to God. Even if short simple prayers are all you can pray, continue to do so.
 - Have you ever grieved for something? What was the process like for you? What helped you to feel the loss and understand its place in your life?

- **Accept:** In order to move beyond grief, we must learn to accept the wound. Even when healed, scars may remain. Healing does not change what happened in the past. Acceptance isn't agreeing that the hurt *should have* happened, merely recognizing that it did.
 - **Write it Out:** If it helps to write out your hurts or losses, do so. Be content to leave these events in the past.
 - Choose to dwell in the present and have your eyes set on the future. The past is not changeable, but what you have the power to change is your present and your future.
 - Choose not to think of yourself as a victim any longer. Instead, think of yourself as a beloved child of God, victorious in Jesus! As long as you think of yourself as a victim, the hurt continues.
 - When you long for what is impossible, recognize that you are longing for eternity with God. Direct your hopes and longings to Him who can satisfy us.



What are some things you long for that God can satisfy?

Why does continuing to think of yourself as a victim continue the hurt instead of put an end to it? How are we victorious instead of victims if we belong to Jesus?

- **Renew:** As you heal from your wounds, remember you may need to unlearn ways of acting and reacting. You may need to change your thoughts, your words, and your reactions.
 - **Stop Dwelling and Retelling:** When we continually replay the events in our mind and speak about them over and over, that wound still has power to hurt us. Instead, we must choose to think about other things and speak about hope rather than despair.
 - **Remember with Joy:** There is a time for sharing grief, but it is temporary. For those loved ones we have lost, we do not have to forget them, but rather think on the good memories we have of them.
 - **Relearn:** To renew our thoughts and actions, we must spend time in His Word and allow His Spirit to change us. We must be active in giving our worries, anxieties, and hurtful memories to Christ.
 - Read these verses and summarize what you learn in your own words:
Colossians 3:1-2, Romans 8:5-6, Philippians 4:8

- **Restoration:** Once we have identified, grieved, accepted and renewed our minds and behaviors, we can seek restoration. This may involve extending forgiveness to the offender, or restoring what was lost or taken from us.
 - **Freedom through Praise:** When we praise God for all that has happened in our life – good and bad – we acknowledge that God can use any situation to bring us closer to Him. There is tremendous freedom in learning to praise God in all things!



- o **Freedom through Forgiveness:** If it is possible to offer forgiveness to your offenders, it will give you closure and honour God. Choose to set them free from the debt they owe you. Accept them without trying to change who they are. You do not have to accept further hurt, but you can change your expectations of who they can be.
- o **Seek Reconciliation:** Reconciliation is the restoration of a broken relationship. It may take a long time to achieve, and may never be fully accomplished. In the case of having forgiven an enemy, reconciliation may never happen. But in the case of a broken relationship with a friend, it should be diligently sought.

❖ **When You Have Committed Sins Against Others:** Throughout this lesson we have focused on what to do if you have unhealed hurts in your life. Sometimes those wounds are caused by what you yourself have done to others. Sin committed against others can harm us and damage relationships, and it is important to grieve for that also.

- **Take responsibility:** In order to move on from our past sin, we must agree with God that it was sin, and while there may have been influencing factors, we are guilty and responsible for our actions. This is a difficult first step!
- **Know there is forgiveness in Christ:** All of your sins can be forgiven. Jesus’ death on the cross was sufficient to cover every wrong you have committed. However, you must repent of the sin (stop doing it and regret it), confess it to God, and ask for His forgiveness. Receive this forgiveness and don't dwell on guilt any longer.
- **Read the following verses. Write down what they say about the forgiveness available to you:**

1 John 1:9	
Romans 8:1	
Romans 5:1	
Psalms 103:11-12	

- **Recognize there are consequences:** Depending on the sin committed, there may be natural consequences to your actions (including broken relationships, lack of trust, loss of job, incarceration, divorce, or alienation from family). You must accept these consequences, even though you have forgiveness in Jesus.



- **Ask for forgiveness and seek reconciliation:** If possible, come to the person you have wronged and ask for their forgiveness. Admit what you have done, tell them you have repented, and that you have sought forgiveness from God.
 - **If they refuse to forgive:** You cannot force anyone to forgive you. Pray for them. Pray that they will be released from their pain. Know that God has forgiven you, and that the forgiveness of others may take time.
 - **If they forgive:** Take steps to restore the relationship. You will have to demonstrate your trustworthiness and love to them, and eventually you may regain the relationship you once had.

SUMMARY

- ❖ Emotional hurts and wounds from past events can harm our current relationships and ability to live healthy happy productive lives.
- ❖ The results of past sin is damaging and can cause emotional and even physical problems.
- ❖ Healing these wounds requires a process that involves identifying the cause of the wound, grief, acceptance, renewal and restoration.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1.

How can we control our thought life and why is it important to do so? How is this related to healing from emotional hurts?

2.

What resources has God given us to heal our past hurts? How do we know God cares about the wounded and broken-hearted?