

4 Practising Forgiveness

Bible passage

Jesus and Peter on the Beach
(John 21:1–19)

Before

Reflect

God, in Jesus, has freely forgiven us and it is because we are forgiven that we are able to forgive others. We are forgiven forgivers.

Every experience of painful relationships is different. Sometimes forgiveness feels challenging but not impossible. In other situations, forgiveness is a much longer and thornier process. In some cases, the perpetrator may be unknown or may not be alive, making closure and complete reconciliation impossible. Reconciliation may also not be possible or safe in a face-to-face meeting with someone. This session provides an opportunity to explore the complexity of both forgiving and asking for forgiveness.

Despite how difficult it is (or perhaps because of it) forgiveness is a liberating, heart-expanding, game-changing opportunity for us as we seek to be reconcilers. Forgiveness does not excuse the wrong. Instead, it is powerful because we recognise a wrong has been done. It takes courage, hope and grace, and it cannot be rushed.

We might often focus on the big moments of forgiveness, but we are invited to make forgiveness a part of our daily lives. In the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, we are encouraged to pray for our daily bread and then to pray to be forgiven as we forgive others.

Heads Up

Reflect on your experiences of forgiveness – both of forgiving others and of being forgiven. This will help you engage with this session, but you won't be expected to share anything you don't want to.

During

Story



Craig's story

What does this story say to you about practising forgiveness?

 Write your notes in these spaces...



Jesus and Peter on the Beach

(John 21:1–19)

What do you learn about Jesus in this story?

In the film and the Bible passage, how do the three habits help people practise forgiveness?

Space

Stepping into the story

Use the space below to write or draw your responses during the Space activity.

How do you feel as you move through the water towards Jesus?

What does it mean for you to eat breakfast with Jesus on this beach?

How do you know that Jesus has forgiven you?

How does this moment change the way you see

- yourself?
- your relationship with Jesus?
- your relationship with others when they let you down?

In Small Groups



"When I cultivate forgiveness in my small everyday encounters, I am preparing for a time when a much larger act of forgiveness will be asked of me, as it most certainly will... When I develop a mindset of forgiveness, rather than a mindset of grievance, I don't just forgive a particular act; I become a more forgiving person... What was once a reason for rupture and alienation becomes an opportunity for repair and greater intimacy."

The Book of Forgiving: the Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World, by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Reverend Canon Mpho Tutu.

In groups discuss:

- What resonates with your own experience?
- What do you find challenging?

Sanctuary



An important part of our identity in Christ is that we are 'forgiven forgivers'. God, in Jesus, has forgiven us and forgiveness is a gift that we are entrusted to share generously with those around us, helped by the Holy Spirit.

After →

Top Takeaway


Write or draw one thing you want to take away from this session.

Act

God is with us in the mess and complexity of trying to put forgiveness into practice in our relationships.

Be Curious_

How could I be a better listener?

 **Try** being curious about the story of someone who has hurt you and about your own feelings towards them. (You might ask, 'I wonder what's going on for them' or, 'I wonder why this made me feel like that'.)


Be Present_

Where am I showing up and sticking around?
Who could I have better encounters with?

 **Try** seeking God's presence in places or relationships where there is pain or injustice.

Reimagine_

Where am I in need of hope?
How could I act on the hopes I already have?

 **Try** reimagining a relationship or situation where forgiveness seems unachievable.
Pray for hope and for God to change the situation.

End

difference.