

A NEW BEGINNING: BE FORGIVING!

Scripture used: [John 21:15-17 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

This week, Pastor Tilden Fang continues our discussion of a new beginning. Over the past weeks, we've looked at how to move through adversity and make new goals to allow God to begin something new in our lives. This week, we look at one essential component of a new beginning that we haven't looked at yet: forgiveness. God does not let us forget that forgiveness is at the heart of a healthy new beginning. For many of us, the question is not whether God is ready to forgive us and whether He is ready to move on and move forward. Many of us know His heart of forgiveness. However, we are often not ready to forgive ourselves. In this week's message, we look at the process of applying God's forgiveness to our own lives as we learn to better forgive ourselves.

KEY POINTS

- 1) **God is ready to offer forgiveness.** In [Isaiah 43:22-25](#), God lists out all the ways that the people of Israel have fallen short. Despite what the people should have been doing or didn't do, God speaks over them and lets them know His heart resides in forgiveness. He is intending to blot out their sins and remember them no more. He affirms to the people that He has a new beginning in store for them and He is ready to move forward. While you may not be ready to move forward and embrace a new beginning, God is ready to help you on this journey and He is ready to forgive your past.
- 2) **God wants you to be able to forgive yourself.** Forgiving yourself can be hard, especially if you tend to be hard on yourself and sweat the small things. In order to move forward and accept God's forgiveness, you have to have the courage to forgive yourself. Since God has spoken forgiveness over us, He wants us to believe Him and be able to apply it to ourselves.
- 3) **4 Key Lessons About Forgiveness.** In John 18, we see Peter deny or disown Jesus 3 times on the night that Jesus was arrested to be crucified. How did Peter go from being devastated by despair and guilt to a bold, courageous leader of the early church just a few weeks later? In [John 21:15-17](#), we learn 4 key lessons about forgiveness:
 - 1) **God wants to forgive us, no matter what we've done.** Even though Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends, denied knowing Jesus three times, Jesus is ready to forgive Peter. God's story in Scripture is consistent that God is able and willing to forgive people of anything; it's not the respectable that enter the kingdom of God, it's the repentant. No matter what you've done, God knows your heart and invites you to repentance and forgiveness.
 - 2) **Forgiving ourselves is not the same as excusing ourselves.** In this passage, Jesus refuses to allow Peter to merely excuse himself. Instead, Jesus forces Peter to confront what he did. Excusing ourselves leads to greater insecurity or callousness; the deep work of forgiveness leads to courage, empathy, and a greater love for God and for others.
 - 3) **Forgiving ourselves starts with honest self-awareness.** It is hard work to reflect on your hidden motivations, but without doing this we will not be able to experience God's forgiveness nor to truly forgive ourselves.
 - 4) **Forgiving ourselves is the humility to fully trust God's forgiveness.** This is ultimately what Peter shows us, he doesn't run away or excuse his actions, he shows humility by acknowledging his need for Jesus and commitment to Him, and he is able to accept God's forgiveness and start a courageous new beginning in his life.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Where have you found it hardest to forgive yourself? Have you experienced the difference in your life between excusing yourself and forgiving yourself?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [John 21:15-17](#). How does Jesus engage with Peter in a way that brings restoration and forgiveness? In what ways is this interaction atypical (what elements of forgiveness would you expect to see that you don't see in this passage)? How do we know that Peter was forgiven and restored? How has God offered you a new beginning that you have yet to embrace?
- 3) **DO** - This week's reflection question: "Where do I need greater self-awareness so I can more fully receive God's forgiveness?" Discuss and reflect on this and see you Wednesday for our 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting kickoff, and see you next Sunday!