

FORGIVENESS WORKSHOP

HANDOUT

*From The Sacred Romance, by Brent Curtis and John Eldredge: (partly
paraphrased)*

While we wish there was only beauty in the world, each of us has known enough pain to raise serious questions about life. When we get hurt it's like an Arrow in our heart. We cannot deny the Arrows. Some arrived in a hail, blocking out the sun. Others descended in a more subtle way that only let us know we were wounded years later. They all seem to strike close to that fearful place, a place that says I am alone in a cold indifferent world. However the Arrows come to us, whether through loss, abandonment or some deep violation of abuse, their message is the same—KILL YOUR HEART.

When we are young, some of the most defining Arrows strike. It feels like an ambush and our response is at a gut level. We may never put words to it. Our deepest convictions are formed without conscious effort, but the effect is a shift deep in our soul. We make unspoken judgments to never be in that position again. If you listen carefully to your life, you may begin to see how it has been shaped by the unique Arrows you've known and the resulting judgments.

"Becoming a Christian" however doesn't necessarily solve the dilemma of the Arrows. Many are lodged deep and refuse to allow some angry wound inside to heal. We cannot change by trying harder. We must deal with the Arrows because they refuse to be silent. You can get very busy being a Christian—doing good things, taking a mission trip, going to a conference, but you're still walking around unhealed with all these Arrows in your heart. We try to live as a Christian—believe and behave accordingly—but the pain and turmoil in our hearts set us up to live a double life.

God and Satan each have a design, a battle plan to capture our hearts. God wants to heal our hearts. Satan's grand tactic is to sneak in our lives as the storyteller. He takes our particular Arrows and weaves a message that says God isn't fair and He doesn't care. We begin to see and interpret all of life through this message.

This is the story of all our lives in one way or another. At some point we all face the same decision—what will we do with the Arrows we've known? Today is the day God wants to help you start the process of removing these Arrows from your heart. He wants to change you from the inside out. He will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. (Ezekiel 36:26)

Our relationship with our father and mother is the trunk of our whole tree. Whatever went wrong there and remains unexamined and unhealed, plays out in all our current relationships. And not only that, but our experience of our earthly father (and sometimes mother) is profoundly parallel to our idea of what God is like.

--John Sandford

“Why hasn’t God fixed my life yet?” AND “Why don’t I feel close to God?”

It’s probably because you have some forgiveness work to do.

C.S. Lewis: “God shows much more of Himself to some people than to others, not because He has favorites, but because we see and experience God with our whole selves. It’s hard for God to show Himself to a man whose whole mind and character are in the wrong

condition. His glimpses of God will be blurred. Sunlight has no favorites but cannot be reflected in a dusty mirror as clearly as a clean one.”

Unforgiveness, bitterness, judgments, inner vows, jealousy, hatred, condemnation, shame, fear, lies all put us in that “wrong condition.” They qualify as decay and attract the demonic like rats to rotting meat. We need to chase off the rats (deliverance and breaking off spiritual strongholds through prayer). **But there’s no point if we don’t also take out the garbage** (deal with our Arrows and do the kingdom work of repentance and forgiveness.) If we continue to live with unresolved Arrows in our hearts, the enemy becomes our storyteller, and God feels far away.

Bill Johnson: “Heaven is not moved simply by the needs of man. It’s not that God doesn’t care. He sent Jesus after all. When God is moved by human need, He seldom fixes the problem outright. Instead He provides Kingdom principles -- that when we embrace and come into agreement with them, it corrects the problem.”

So what are those Kingdom principles?

Spiritual Laws that affect all of life whether you believe it or not:

1. **Law of sowing and reaping:** (Gal 6:7, Mt. 7:1-2, Mt. 5:7, Rom. 2:1)
Plant peas, you get peas. Judge others and you’ll receive judgment back. Want mercy? Give mercy. Hurt people hurt other people. Healed people, heal people. Typically we demand an-eye-for-an-eye justice when others hurt us, but want mercy, forgiveness and grace when we fail others. You can’t have it both ways.
2. **Law of increase – Bitterroots** (Heb. 12:15)
The longer you have unresolved wounds, the more powerful they become. We broadcast our wound-based assumptions about life and people fall in line with our assumptions. So our original wound multiplies in current relationships. Also unforgiveness turns into a grudge, which turns into bitterness, and sometimes leads to sickness, death or murder. Sow a spark, reap a forest fire. (Think Columbine)
3. **The 5th Commandment – Honoring father and mother** (Deut:5:16)

How you treat your parents or whoever raised you, sets a pattern for other relationships in life. To the extent that you remain hurt and bitter, life will not go well with you. To the extent that you honor your parents, life will go well with you.

THESE SPIRITUAL LAWS ARE NOT SUGGESTIONS... THEY ARE HOW LIFE WORKS

Four things *can* happen when we get hurt:

1. We hold onto **unforgiveness** about what happened: Dad yelled at me. I'm mad at Dad.
2. We pass **judgment** on the person who hurt us: Dad is a jerk.
3. We make an inner **vow** to protect ourselves: I will never let Dad get close to me.
4. We believe a **lie** about ourselves or life: Dad doesn't love me. Men can't be trusted.

UNFORGIVENESS – We all understand the first part. You get hurt and feel mad. You form a resentment, and if you don't deal with it, you carry around unforgiveness.

What does forgiving someone really mean?

--Forgiveness is saying "Someone is as wrong as wrong can be, but I release them to God and will let Him be their judge." (Catherine Marshall, in *Something More*)

--Forgiveness is a decision of your will. The feelings usually follow later.

--Forgiveness is not excusing something (Never say it's okay, because it wasn't!)

--Forgiveness doesn't mean freedom from consequences. Making restitution is Biblical

--Forgiveness doesn't mean being a doormat. It is good and right to speak truth in love when someone has hurt you or continues to hurt you. God does not want us to accept abuse.

--God still asks you to forgive someone even if they don't apologize, even if they never change, even if they might try to hurt you again.

The basis for forgiveness – Matthew 18: 21-35 – *We forgive others because God forgave us. That's it.*

Write your name in your Bible and date it to signify the moment in time when you understood this Scripture and agreed with God to forgive others from your heart.

JUDGMENTS – sets in motion the laws of reaping and sowing

1. The difference between judging and discerning...an important distinction:

--Judgment is to condemn another with our thoughts and words. It's name-calling and putting down. For example if someone tells us a lie, and we say they're a liar and tell others—this is judgment.

Only God has the right to judge.

--Discernment is to recognize, come to know, see, and be wise about something. If someone tells us a lie, we are not asked to be blind. We see it and may even talk to them about it. In our hearts we are concerned for them, wondering what made them lie. We don't speak badly of them to others. Instead, we feel

motivated to pray for them. This is discernment and is good. It honors the person and show faith that God can work redemptively in their life.

How will you know whether you are discerning or judging? By what rises up in your heart. Is it love, compassion, concern? Or is it disdain, a desire to reject, blame and gossip about someone? The more we choose the lay down judgment, the more God increases our discernment, because He can trust us.

2. Why is judging bad? There is the power of life and death in our words

Read Proverbs 18:21, Matthew 5:21-22 (Message Bible), Jeremiah 9:8 even says, “Their tongue is a deadly *arrow*...” The judgments we put on others have power to destroy them, *but also us* because of the law of reaping and sowing. Here’s how the boomerang effect works:

3. Bitterroot Expectancies – self-fulfilling prophecies

--Father is a traveling salesman, not home very much. So you believe men aren’t around much. What you experienced, you generalize to other people in your life. Not necessarily a wound here.

4. Bitterroot Judgments – wound-based assumptions. You get hurt and put a judgment on the one who hurt you, now there’s a whole new level at play. The law of reaping and sowing kicks in.

--Father committed adultery, abandoned family. Son judged his father, but when he grew up, he did the very same thing. This is why there are generational sin patterns in families.

VOWS – an pronouncement of your will that has *binding spiritual power*.

--Obviously we’re not talking about marriage vows, which are good. Rather, we’re focusing on wound-based vows. “I will never trust Dad.” or “See if I ever share my real feelings” or “I will always reject men before they reject me.” Sometimes it’s said out loud. Sometime it’s an inner pronouncement of your will. Either way it has binding spiritual power.

--Wound-based vows can look good. “I will always protect my children” But they are still bad because you act according to the vow (maybe becoming overprotective) instead of trusting God and the leading of His Spirit in your parenting.

--Vows have tremendous power over our lives. They affect us like a railroad track affects the train. Many inner vows are set in childhood. Some of the deepest, most poisonous and pernicious Arrows often get us in our most tender and vulnerable years, causing vows that affect us much later.

Example: a girl feels unnoticed or unloved by her father. She may make an inner vow ... “I will never need a man.” She may have a string of relationships with guys but never really open her heart to any of them. She flirts in order to use them. Their attention fills a hole in her heart that her dad left because he didn’t have time for her, but she still has no intention to have a real relationship with a man.

LIES – overarching themes we believe about ourselves or life as a whole

--The enemy is called the “father of lies.” He wants to sneak in our minds and become the storyteller. “All men will hurt you” “You will never be worthy of God’s love”

What will you do with the Arrows in your life?

--Self-justification and preservation – I have a right to stay mad. My anger keeps others in check

--Don’t want healing – my wounds bring a lot of attention from others

--Live a double life – outwardly fine, inwardly in pain. These are angry nice people.

--Why hasn't God fixed your life yet? *It requires your participation* to forgive, to repent for judgments made, to break vows and to dispel lies.

How do we know what our Arrows are?

--The Holy Spirit is the best Counselor because He brings up what is pertinent. Give Him permission to explore your heart and the history of your wounds.

--What happened to you is not as significant as *your response* to what happened.

--Sometimes a wound happens because of what someone did, said or implied. But some wounds are based on things you didn't get—but needed.

--It is harder to look for Arrows if you had loving and stable parents. A fierce loyalty rises up. However, it is still important to let God examine you. ("I Remember Mama" – in *The Forgiveness Handbook*)

--Bad fruit points to a bad root. Watch for times your emotional reactions are out of proportion to the present situation. A current incident may trigger a past wound. This tells you to look for the root.

--Forgiveness work is not about bashing parents. Our aim is to honor parents.

--Forgiveness work is not about wallowing in the past. We are looking back only for a season in order to have a healthy present and future.

Getting started...

1. Pick one person you need to forgive, and set aside a chunk of time. Usually important to begin with your father or mother, or whoever raised you.

2. Write down how this person blessed you. It's important to look at the good things.

3. Write down how this person was wounded, so you see them with eyes of compassion.

4. Then ask God to bring to your remembrance, *in specific ways*, how this person hurt you. Keep a running journal.

--What was the incident, what was said, how did you feel at the time?

--What did you need from this person, but didn't receive?

--How did you respond (unforgiveness, judgment, vow, or lie?)

5. When ready, meet with another person you trust (or a small group) to process your work. Your leaders will be setting up options to facilitate this in your own churches. Confidentiality is all-important. Set aside several hours for this work. Grieving is a normal and healthy part of this process. Here's what to do:

--Pray for spiritual protection

--**Speak forgiveness out loud for each incident** (Sometimes God will ask you to speak forgiveness directly to the person who hurt you, which can lead to reconciliation. Most often, though, He just wants you to speak forgiveness out loud to Him, with the help of another friend, your small group, a counselor, or a pastor).

--**Confess and repent of the judgments** that you made against the person

--**Break the vows in the name of Jesus.** Vows are spiritual strongholds of the soul. Your prayer partner or small group can join you, praying that God would undo the power that a vow has had over your life.

--**Identify the lies** that you believed because you got hurt. Ask God to replace the lie with the truth. Again, your prayer partner or group can join you in this process.

Follow up with choices to live Kingdom Principles...

--After forgiving your parents, go on to forgive, siblings, grandparents and other relatives.

Continue with teachers, church leaders, employers, friends, associates etc. Some people need to forgive God (though He hasn't done anything wrong). Many need to forgive themselves as well. Let the Holy Spirit show you.

--When you've done the work of forgiveness, the past no longer rocks you. The past belongs to God and doesn't have the power to influence your present reality. Anytime you revisit the events of the past apart from the forgiveness work outlined here, you may be subjecting yourself to deception. If you linger, reminisce, cling to past hurts, even though they're over and not true now, you can actually resurrect things you should have freedom over. Finish the work and leave the past as a closed chapter.

--Pray for the one who hurt you. Ask God to free them from things that hold them captive.

--Adopt "Kingdom Parents" if your parents are dead or too dysfunctional. Many wounded people find healing by building new relationships with others in the Body of Christ. We need kingdom mothers to tell us we have worth and are loved. We need kingdom fathers to bless us and call us into the purposes that God has for us.

--Invite people you trust to speak into your life and hold you accountable.

--Keep short accounts--- deal with your stuff everyday. Guard your heart to avoid unforgiveness, judgments, vows and lies when new wounds happen in your current life.

--Learn to not take offense easily, learn to bless others with your words, and learn to take your thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. Learn to move in the opposite spirit, praying for others instead of criticizing them. Give generously to others in need. Make contact to others who are alienated from you and seek reconciliation whenever possible. If you live with these Kingdom Principles, you position yourself for blessings over the long-term. And you will pass this on to others including your kids and the next generation. They will not have the same struggle because you have set something in motion that will bring favor to them as well.

--When you clean out the past, and live by Kingdom Principles you are free to receive more from God—creativity, solutions to problems, gifts of the Spirit, fruits of the Spirit and you can start to prosper in all things—in family, marriage, and friendships, in your finances, in work environment—and even empower others to find freedom and healing as well. *Susan Hill*

RESOURCE LIST

Healing childhood wounds, fatherlessness, and forgiveness work:

To Own a Dragon, by Don Miller

Sons of the Father, by Gordon Dalbey

Healing the Masculine Soul, by Gordon Dalbey (great book for husbands, brothers!)

Healing Women's Emotions, by Paula Sandford

Champions for Life, by Bill Glass with Terry Pluto

The Transformation of the Inner Man, by John and Paul Sandford

Genuine Recovery, by Edward M. Smith

Movies that show the father or mother wound in people:

The Kid (Disney) with Bruce Willis, father wound

Walk The Line – Johnny Cash's life, father wound

Ya Ya Sisterhood – mother wound

Where The Heart Is – mother wound/mother blessing through another person
LOST – the series. Almost every main character has a father wound
Good Will Running – father/mother wound (a non-swearing version if possible)
The Kite Runner – father wound

Stories that show other people's points of contact with God:

Coins in the Driveway, by Erli Martinson

(Local author: to order, email the author at coinsinthedriveway@gmail.com)

Surprised By Joy, by C.S. Lewis

Memoirs of Childhood and Youth, by Albert Schweitzer

Practicing the Presence of God, by Brother Lawrence

Oswald Chambers: Abandoned To God, By David McCasland

Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham, by Billy Graham

Mother Teresa: A Complete Authorized Biography, by Katheryn Spink

The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr., by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Is That Really You, God? by Loren Cunningham, with Janice Rogers

The Man Comes Around: The Spiritual Journey of Johnny Cash, by Dave Urbanski

Struggling with anger or disappointment with God? Read these:

Disappointment with God, by Philip Yancey

Where is God When it Hurts? by Philip Yancey

When God Doesn't Make Sense, by James Dobson

The Sacred Romance, by Brent Curtis and John Eldredge

Learning to hear God's fresh voice? Here are some books:

Morning Mercies, a devotional series by Claudia LeCoure

(Local author: to order email Claudia at claudialecoure@aol.com)

Closer Than Your Skin: Unwrapping the Mystery of Intimacy with God, by Susan D. Hill

(Local author: to order a signed copy, email Susan at sdhill747@hotmail.com)

The Beginner's Guide to Hearing God, by Jim Goll

Developing Your Prophetic Gift, by John Paul Jackson

Growing in the Prophetic, by Mike Bickle

The Beginner's Guide to the Gift of Prophecy, by Jack Deere

Can You Hear Me?: Tuning in to the God Who Speaks, by Brad Jersak

Worksheet for Prayer Team

(by Susan Hill)

Name:

Person being forgiven:

Relationship:

Good things about the person:

How the person was wounded themselves:

List of hurtful things said and done by this person: (mark with U for unforgiveness, J for judgment, V for vows said, and L for lies believed) Remember judgments will be generally a list of adjectives, vows will start with "I will never..." "I will always..." and are very specific, while lies are over arching themes.

Unforgiveness

Judgments

 Vows

Lies

Forgiveness Inventory Journal

A lifetime of pain, released

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him,

so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. Mark 11:25

Begin with the most prominent person in your life, start at the beginning of your relationship.

Begin to identify any un-forgiveness or offenses that remain outstanding with that person.

1) Write down the offender's name. 2) List the offenses you believe were committed against you.

3) Write down your sinful responses, if any, towards the offender.

Slowly make your way through your relationships from closest to most distant people in your life.

