

ENCOUNTERS OF THE MOST AMAZING KIND
LIFE GROUP APPLICATION WEEK 1
ENCOUNTERING GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Introduction: Our focus this week is on the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32. The goal is to see how important it is not just to ask for God's forgiveness but to respond to God's forgiveness in a way that rewrites our story and allows us to move into a realization of God's favor. We are contrasting how both the elder brother and the younger brother had sinned and were forgiven by their father but their response and the results took them in completely different directions and experiences.

It is our prayer in the life group discussion that each of us will encounter God's forgiveness in a fresh and powerful way.

Ice breaker

1. The heart of Christianity is having not just an explanation of Jesus but an experience of Jesus. It is not just knowing God is around but experiencing Him "show up" in your life. Can you share a time where Jesus became so much more than a belief but a reality, a person whose love you experienced in a personal way?
2. In the story of the Prodigal, Jesus makes an important contrast between the religion of works represented by the elder brother and grace represented by the younger brother.
What is something you took from this that has been especially important to you lately?
 - a. A legalist validates themselves by judging others. Condemning others only robs you of experiencing the grace God wants to give you.
 - b. It is not the bad we've done that ruins our ability to receive forgiveness but how proud we are to admit our need for grace.
 - c. You can believe the right things and perform religiously well and still not know God and have an intimate relationship with Him.
 - d. God is not rigidly looking for ways to condemn us but passionately looking for an opportunity to welcome us into His forgiveness and grace.
 - e. Nothing we have done has to rob us from experiencing who we can be in Jesus. The kiss of the Father can utterly change our life.
3. How does the cross correct and confront us but not condemn us? How does it help us experience God's redemption for our lives?

4. The cross not only was a payment for our sin but an exchange of our sin for His righteousness. What is something that you let Satan steal from you through your sin, that God might want to especially help you to claim and realize again in a greater way?

Blessing for cursing	Favor for rejection	
Healing for sickness	Abundance for poverty	
Victory for loss and attack	Restoration for shame and humiliation	Eternal
life for death	Acceptance instead of condemnation	
The blessing of the Holy Spirit instead of the torment of demonic spirits.		

5. Receiving and giving forgiveness for the past, releases freedom for the present and future. How does this apply to your life when you are accountable and making amends?

Do you have an experience where a reconciliation with God has led to a reconciliation with another person?

6. As you have confessed and nailed past sins to the cross, what kind of freedom have you experienced? Is there something you would like to ask the group to help you nail to the cross and receive God's freedom for today?