



WEEK SIX: Making Sense of Ssenevigrof – Study Guide

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We all know the age-old adage that says, "Bitterness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die." Yet sometimes we would rather continue drinking the poison of bitterness than extend the hand of forgiveness. In this study, we will take a look at how both bitterness and forgiveness affect our relationships in a huge way. One wrecks our relationships while the other shines the message of Jesus into our relationships.

Where Am I Today?

- 1) Would you say you are a person who is quick to forgive when wronged, or one who holds grudges? Explain your answer.

Into the Bible

- 2) One of the first questions we may ask ourselves when someone wrongs us is, "Why should I forgive?" Read **Ephesians 4:31-5:2** and **Colossians 3:12-13** to get better insight on forgiveness. What does Paul say is the reason we should forgive others? In Ephesians, what are some other things that can grow out of our bitterness?

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- 3) Everything our culture tells us about relationships and forgiveness is completely opposite from Jesus' teaching, and how He tells us to live in relationships. His call to forgiveness is powerful and proclaims the message to show mercy and redemption so others can see. Read **Matthew 5:7** and **Luke 6:32-36**. What does Jesus say would be the natural tendency to act towards other people? How is it different from how He tells us to live?

- 4) Bitterness and forgiveness both flow out of our hearts. Often, the way we handle being sinned against will reveal either bitterness or forgiveness in our hearts. Read **Hebrews 12:14-15**. How do these verses suggest that bitterness is more than a surface issue? What happens when we don't uproot bitterness from our lives?

How Does This Apply

- 5) Forgiveness isn't meant to minimize your pain or hurt, but to magnify the greatness of God's grace in your life to others. When we think of suffering and forgiveness, no one suffered greater than Jesus. He went through tremendous pain for our forgiveness of sins. What can we learn from the forgiveness God extends to us that will help us forgive those who have wronged us?

- 6) Here's the hard truth. Bitterness is no one else's heart problem except our own. And, as we learned in Hebrews, if we don't uproot it, bitterness will affect other people in a big way. If you have harbored bitterness in your life, who around you bore the brunt of your bitterness? Maybe you are currently bitter towards someone. How different would your life and relationships be if you let go of your bitterness?

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- 7) Forgiveness toward others begins with our gratitude for all that Jesus has done on our behalf. We can evaluate how thankful we are for God's forgiveness by how easily we forgive others. Take a look at your relationships. Whether you needed forgiveness yourself or extended forgiveness to others, how has it impacted your relationships? How can you help people see the characteristics of God when you choose forgiveness instead of bitterness?

Continue Learning on Your Own

We discussed a lot in this study about what it means to forgive others, but let's look at some things forgiveness does not mean.

- 8) Forgiveness does not mean that you need to wait for someone to give an apology in order to forgive them. One of the greatest examples of this can be found in **Luke 23:32-38**. Read this passage and answer the following question. How can this give you a glimpse of the greatness of God's love?
- 9) Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation. Reconciliation is working through conflict with another to reach a peaceful solution. A person can repent without the other person extending forgiveness and vice versa. Read **Romans 12:18**. How does Paul say we should live?
- 10) Just as sanctification is a two-fold ongoing process, so is forgiveness. Forgiveness is not just a one-time event. You can forgive a person once, but they may hurt you again and you may need to forgive again. Read **Matthew 18:21-22**. What answer does Jesus give Peter on forgiveness, and what was He trying to teach Peter?