



Week 1.

- How would you define forgiveness?
- Read Mark 1:4-11
- What does John offer to the people who flocked to hear him speak?
 ‘Repentance prepares us to receive the good news that Jesus brings.’
 (p.1846 NRSV Spiritual Formation Bible)
- What is the ‘Good News’ that Jesus is to bring?
 ‘Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive’
 (CS Lewis Mere : Christianity : p.101)
- When do we feel we have a need for forgiveness? What are we looking for? Who from?
- How do you feel about Cherry’s ‘levels’ of hurt? Do you agree with his statement about subjectivity?
 ‘we should expect the level of hurt endured to make a real difference to the way in which the challenge to forgive is experienced & to the kind of response that is possible’ (p.22)
- Do agree with Cherry, that forgiveness is a gift involving ‘internal moral tension & wrestling within’ (p. 24)?
- What factors might be necessary to enable us to be able to forgive? Are we able to do so alone?
- Close with the Lord’s Prayer which has forgiveness at its heart.

Our Need To Forgive

Forgiveness is difficult but vital if we are not to be ‘walking the treadmills of the past’ (Holloway p.5)

Hurt is many layered; loss of confidence, shame, guilt can ‘dislocate, fragment or even shatter us’ & affect our identity. (p.13)

Cherry identifies 4 different levels of hurt (p.18):

- * Trivial -minor, incidental, often unintentional
eg. forgotten appointment.
- * Serious - unjust & harmful but without terrible consequences
eg. stolen purse.
- * Significant - injustice is painful, causing bewilderment, indignation or sadness
eg. betrayal
- * Shattering - undermines health, integrity or identity
eg. Torture & Abuse

‘Questions of forgiveness need to be framed in relation to the subjective experience not objective experience’ (p.20)

John came to prepare the way for Jesus, who in turn came to enable us to have a change of heart & mind that allows for letting go of old ways of living, former burdens and wrongs.

Spiritual Struggle - ‘We need to know, first of all, how to discern the tendencies that lead us in the direction of sin, & we need to be able to identify our own areas of personal fragility & weakness & what is negative in us. We need to then name these things & accept responsibility for them, rather than ignoring or repressing them. Finally we can begin the long & difficult struggle that will allow the Word & the will of God to reign in us!’

(Enzo Bianchi : Words of Spirituality : SPCK : 2012 : p.17)

Resource : Eric Lomax’s experience of torture & forgiveness as portrayed by Colin Firth in ‘The Railway Man’ film.

[Unless otherwise stated all quotes are from : Stephen Cherry : Healing Agony - Re-Imagining Forgiveness : Continuum : 2012]

