

Wrestling With the F word

A Lenten Study in forgiveness, conflict, hurt and reconciliation

Format

Opening Prayer

Text/image

Introductions

Input (10mins)

Small groups (10mins)

Input (20mins)

Small Groups (20mins)

Plenary (20mins)

Closing prayer

Jacob wrestling the angel



Mark 2: 16-17

**They [Pharisees & teachers of the Law] asked his disciples:
“ Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”**

**On hearing this, Jesus said to them,
it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill.
I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners!**

(New International Translation)

Zephaniah 3: 17

**The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save.
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will quiet you with his love,
He will rejoice over you with singing.**

(New King James Translation)

prayer for Wrestling with the F word

God, you are with us.

God, you are with us, waiting.

**God, you are with us: waiting to save, transform,
heal, console,
challenge, change.**

God, you see us.

God, you see us as we are:

***all of us* - past, present, future -**

seen without scold, impatience, or scowl.

God, you see us and your gaze is fixed and loving.

**God, you are strangely here:
in our comfort and dis-comfort
in our ease and unease
in our joy and sorrow.
God, in our comfort you work.
God, in our discomfort you work.
It is not always clear how you work.
God, you are strangely here,
in all of who we are.**

**God, you are calling us.
God, you are calling us with your love.
Loving us *as we are* – in all our contradictions,
in all strength and weakness,
calling us to a life in union with you.
And out of that loving union, you call us -
into healthy relationship with ourselves,
with conflict, with difference,
with others.**

God, you are with us.

God, you are with us, waiting.

**God, you are with us, waiting to save, transform,
heal, console,
challenge, change.**

Guidelines for Learning

- **Chatham House Rules** – like confidentiality (share material not narrative, unless agreed by people); Recording my teaching input.
- **Considerate** – pastoral care; vulnerable; wrestle with your questions; no easy answers; participate as you can;
- **Curious** – notice without judgement; half-formed thoughts/feelings/people are welcome!
- **Compassionate** – feelings will rise and fall – beware the inner critic
- **Contemplative** – infused with prayer

Small Groups 1. (10mins)

Task: read the F Word Prayer

Notice what jumps out/resonates/challenges

- Notice rather than judge.
Beyond good/bad; right wrong – you are loved.
- One at a time and be brief.
- No plenary feedback (this time)

Framework

Forgiveness

Much talked about, deeply misunderstood and distorted.

Definition(s)

Release, pardon, letting go, unhooking, deliverance, liberty.

Hurt

When we are violated/hurt we experience anger and bitterness

We struggle with letting go of hurts and forgiving

The more extreme the offence, the deeper the wound,
the more difficulty we have in praying with Jesus

Father forgive them for they know not what they do

Forgive and Forget?

Conflict?

Conflict

Conflict can reveal the nature and quality of our relationships

Forgiveness and forgetting

Forgiveness is not forgetting.

Forgiveness requires some recognition of the offence.

Forgiveness is a sort of 'good' forgetting

'Good' forgetting: not as amnesia but as a release from the full weight and burden of the past.

**Forgiveness involves coming free of the power of the past
and finding ways to a different future.**

Myths around forgiveness

Myth one: Forgiving means forgetting

Myth two: Forgiveness means accepting the offence

Myth three: Forgiveness is automatic

Myth four: Forgiveness is quick and a one-time event

Myth five: Forgiveness means the relationship is reconciled.

Reworking the myths

One: we acknowledge that remembering is essential for forgiveness.

Two: we acknowledge that naming the abuse as 'sinful' and unacceptable is essential to forgiveness.

Three: we acknowledge that anger, hatred and bitterness follow naturally from the abuse of power in family relationships.

Four: we acknowledge that forgiveness is a process

Five: we acknowledge the distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation

Source: Miller (1994)

Forgiveness as story

Forgiveness process as five chapters in the story of a hurt

Source Text

Don't Forgive Too Soon

Linn et al (Paulist Press, 1997)

Elizabeth Kubler Ross

Dying patients passing through five stages of grief:

- **Denial** (I'm not really sick)
- **Anger** (it's the doctors fault)
- **Bargaining** (God, I will stop smoking if you let me live)
- **Depression** (why didn't I get a check up sooner)
- **Acceptance** (I really am going to die and I can accept it)

Any hurt is a loss that is like a small death

- 1. Denial** I don't admit I was hurt
- 2. Anger** It's their fault that I am hurt
- 3. Bargaining** I set up conditions to be fulfilled before I'm ready to forgive
- 4. Depression** It's my fault that I'm hurt
- 5. Acceptance** I look forward to growth from the hurt.

An in-built process for healing emotional and spiritual wounds
(if accompanied by a significant other)

Allows for a process of forgiveness

- **No judgement at any stage.**
- **Each of the five stages is like a chapter in a story, revealing a part of ourselves that we are tempted to push away.**
- **When we listen respectfully to all five chapters in the story of a hurt, we regain our centre and a creative solution can emerge naturally.**

Love(d)

- **The more loved I feel, the more I can love and forgive others**
- **The more I am loved in the midst of whatever I am feeling, the more I can listen carefully to the very things that might otherwise keep me stuck, until they too reveal a creative solution**

Zephaniah 3: 17

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Forgiveness as five chapters in the story of a hurt

Small Group 2 (20mins)

Task

What are you noticing (without judgment) **in yourself** as session progressed. Comfort/discomfort etc

Questions arising – for self, for Paul, for Divine

Wrestle with your questions. Sit. Ponder. Pray over.

Facilitator will gather comments/questions, and share a flavour in plenary

Plenary Session

A flavour of the conversation (15mins)

F word Prayer (meditate on it for five mins per day)

Image/Texts

Pastoral issues – see James; stay with the questions

Closing Prayer - Maya