

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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Detroit, Michigan 48208
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Lesson 3: A Soft Place to Fall¹

Goal: ***Build Authentic Relationships by Reestablishing the Art of “One Anothering.”***

Objective: ***Provide Scriptural support for becoming a soft place for others to fall.***

Overview:

Have you considered how your relationship with God ought to motivate you to forgive others? In gratitude for God’s forgiveness of us, we ought to be willing to forgive others. This month’s lesson should help you explore your need and willingness to forgive others as an expression of our obedience to God and gratitude for His forgiveness of us. Today, many Christians struggle from past hurtful offenses and carry the resulting wounds and scars. Festering grudges cloud and impede the ability to engage in authentic relationships. Unforgiveness is disobedience to God. It stymies spiritual and relational growth. Forgiveness is the act of setting someone free from an obligation to you that is a result of a wrong done to you.² It is a voluntary act of the will carried out by the power of God. There is a definite need to experience the living word of God to overcome barriers interfering with our ability to forgive others.

Jesus demonstrated for us a tender mercy toward the woman caught in the act of adultery. While men wanted to kill her, Jesus was compassionate and merciful toward her. It can be said that He provided a “*soft place for her to fall.*” Out of our gratitude to God, we should practice this same tender kindness when others have done wrong so that they have a *soft place to fall*. This attitude should point them toward Jesus and bring them closer to repentance. “*We are a soft place to fall when we love people through their failures and hurt as God draws them closer to Himself and transforms them from within.*”³

“*But God commanded his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” (Romans 5:8) “*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” (Romans 3:23 KJV)

Many Christians are trapped by feelings of guilt or denial, which undermines their heartfelt expression of gratitude for God’s sacrificial offering of His Son, which demonstrated His love and forgiveness for us. We need to explore the depths of our love and relationship with God to trust Him in our obedience to fulfill His command to forgive others.

Paul teaches us to practice being the new man, “*Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. ...And let the peace of God rule in your heart, to which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*” (Colossians 3:13, 15 KJV).

¹ Jacobsen, W., & Jacobsen, C. *Authentic Relationships: Discover the lost art of “one anothering”*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, (2003). Print.

² Stanley, Charles. *The Gift of Forgiveness*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991. P. 2. Print

³ Jacobsen & Jacobsen. p. 39

Forgiveness fulfills God's purpose and enables us to establish an atmosphere for people to value God's forgiveness! The living Word of God is our source of strength and confidence in His will for us. As we grow to engage in "one anothering" we live out an experience of God's forgiveness for all! The commandment to forgive initiates a process for God's plan to be done through us. Through our trust in God, we identify with the needs of others. As we experience God's forgiveness for us we are free to demonstrate forgiveness and become a *soft place for others to fall*.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8, 9 KJV)

Discussion Point #1:

How did Jesus express the magnitude of God's forgiveness for us and others?

Jesus expressed His forgiveness for all of our personal offense toward God as the Sacrificial Lamb for our salvation.

Among His last words, *"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment and cast lots."* (Luke 23:34 KJV)

Discussion Point #2

How does the world undermine our obedience to God's command to forgive others?

The world conditions our natural resentment to hold others in contempt for offending us, which undermines the depth of our gratitude for God's forgiveness. We are asked to forgive not forget. The Word of God helps us consider our willingness to demonstrate our obedience to God's commands.

Forgiveness is not repressing the memory of a wrong deed. It is not denying the wrong of the offense. It is not burying the pain of the injury. It does not negate the inherent consequences for sin. It does not prevent the injured person from confronting the offender in love. It is choosing to forgive. This takes the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds to lead us to that step.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." (Matthew 5:44)

Discussion Point #3

In what ways would you like God to strengthen you in accepting His forgiveness to demonstrate your forgiveness for other?

Forgiveness is a powerful demonstration of our submission and obedience to God's grace and His will for us. Many Christians need to see God's plan for forgiveness in action in the lives of His family of believers. Therefore, we have an obligation to demonstrate our faith in God's living word to draw other to the comfort and strength we received in our relationship with Him and become a *soft place for others to fall*.

“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

Biblical Exercise:

After prayer for God to strengthen you, identify two to three people in your life to extend the forgiveness you have experienced through your relationship with God to those who have offended you. Share your experience in God’s strength in overcoming barriers with members of your deacon group.

Monthly Biblical Exercises

Month	Year	Monthly Biblical Exercise
October	2011	<i>Introduction to Authentic Relationships</i>
November	2011	<i>Loving Others Like God Loves You</i>
December	2011	<i>A Soft Place to Fall</i>