

GO DEEPER: THE ART OF FORGIVENESS

A Reflection Guide for "Learning to Forgive When Someone You Love Does the Unthinkable"

INTRODUCTION

In this transformative episode of Making Sense of Faith, Adam Hamilton explores forgiveness as life's most essential skill through a deeply personal conversation about tragedy, healing, and hope. As you reflect on this discussion, use this guide to examine your own relationship with forgiveness and discover practical steps toward freedom from the weight of hurt and resentment.

3 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Take a moment to consider what resonated most deeply with you from this conversation:

1. Adam mentions that forgiveness is "the most important life skill you'll ever learn." How does viewing forgiveness as a skill rather than just a feeling change your approach to difficult relationships?
2. Think about your own "backpack of rocks"—the hurts and resentments you carry. What would it feel like to set that backpack down? What's preventing you from doing so?
3. Adam shares that it took him a year and a half of daily prayer to forgive someone who hurt him. How does knowing that forgiveness is often a long process rather than a one-time decision affect your expectations of yourself and others?

2 KEY INSIGHTS

1. Forgiveness begins with understanding, not excusing

"You find hurt people, hurt people, and all of a sudden when they were able to understand what shaped him... It helped them to be able to let go. It didn't mean they excused the way that he treated them growing up or said it was okay or didn't really matter. Of course it mattered. It hurt them. But to be able to let go of the right to retribution or the right to continue to hate."

Question: What might change if you tried to understand the pain behind someone's hurtful actions without excusing their behavior?

Reflection: Consider a person who has wounded you. What circumstances, experiences, or pain might have shaped their actions? How might this understanding create space for empathy without minimizing your own hurt?

2. The six words that transform relationships

"The six words that no relationship can succeed without... is to regularly be able to say, I'm sorry and I forgive you."

Question: Which of these phrases is harder for you to say: "I'm sorry" or "I forgive you"? What makes it difficult?

Reflection: Think about your closest relationships. How might regularly practicing these six words create more connection, healing, and trust? What would need to change in your heart or habits to make this possible?

1 PRACTICE EXERCISE

The Daily Prayer Practice for Difficult People

Based on Adam's 18-month journey of praying for someone who hurt him:

Choose someone you're struggling to forgive—start with a smaller hurt rather than your deepest wound.

For the next week, pray this simple prayer daily: *"God, I pray you would bless [person's name]. I don't understand everything about who they are or why they act this way, but I pray your blessings upon them. Help me to let go of my anger and find empathy for them."*

Instructions:

- Set a daily reminder to pray this prayer
- Even if you don't mean it at first (Adam admits he "had to pray through clenched jaw"), keep saying it
- Notice any shifts in your feelings toward this person over the week
- Remember: this is about your freedom, not theirs

Important note: If you're dealing with ongoing abuse or danger, prioritize your safety first. This exercise works best for situations where you can maintain healthy boundaries.

QUOTES TO CONSIDER

"There's nothing that will be more important for your success in life than the art of forgiveness."

"God gave us a brain for a reason, expects us to use it... asking questions, thinking critically... doubt's not the opposite of faith. It's often a pathway towards faith."

"We live in a world where things happen. But what will we do with that? Where do we find hope in the middle of that? Or comfort or strength?"

CLOSING REFLECTION

Forgiveness is not about forgetting, excusing, or even reconciling. It's about releasing the weight that's been holding you back from the freedom and joy you were meant to experience. As you close this reflection time, remember that learning to forgive—both others and yourself—is a lifelong journey that requires patience, practice, and prayer.

What one small step can you take today toward laying down just one rock from your backpack?

This reflection guide was created to accompany the Making Sense of Faith podcast episode "Learning to Forgive When Someone You Love Does the Unthinkable." For more resources like this, visit makingsenseoffaith.com.