Lesson # 17: FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a 5 step process:

Step 1: “I was wrong – period” (no comma)
Step 2: “I don’t ever want to hurt you this way again.”
Step 3: “These are the steps I am taking to keep from ever hurting you this way again.”
   (you can hold me accountable for these steps.)
Step 4: Now you can say: “I’m sorry”
Step 5: “Will you forgive me?”

1. Open with Slide on Forgiveness 5 steps (read it and come back to it later.) (OR hand out 5 Keys cards OR put it in the handout brochure for the night)

2. Tonight’s Lesson is about Forgiveness.
   a. Comes out of Principle #6:
      i. “Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I’ve done to others…”
   b. Also relates to Steps #8 & #9:
      i. “8: Make a list of all persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all.”
      ii. “9: Make direct amends to such people whenever possible…”

3. Now, last time we talked about “Amends”, so I don’t have to repeat that lesson, BUT wanted to remind you that:
   a. AMENDS lesson dealt with 2 things:
      1. You considering Receiving “Forgiveness” for hurt we have caused others
      2. AND Offering “Forgiveness” to those who have hurt us.
   b. To do this we need to continue to evaluate all of our relationships in light of this issue of “Forgiveness”

4. Tonight: Talk about a FORCE that can Block, Stall, or even Destroy your recovery:
   a. That is: Your inability to ACCEPT and OFFER “Forgiveness”.

5. Now then: Most people agree that “Forgiveness is a wonderful/beautiful thing – right?
   a. Yes, that is until we have to “Forgive” someone who has hurt/offended us
6. Do you know the significance of Sunday, August 2\textsuperscript{nd}?
   a. It’s International Forgiveness Day
   b. Listen to what some famous (or infamous) people have to say about “F”:
      i. “F” means giving up all hope for a better past.”   Lilly Tomlin
      ii. “F” does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.   Paul Bose
      iii. You will know that “F” has begun when you recall those who hurt you and feel the power to wish them well.”   Lewis B. Smedes
      iv. The weak can never “F”. “F”ness is the attribute of the strong.   Gandhi
      v. To err is human to “F” is divine.   Alexander Pope
      vi. He who cannot “F” breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass.   Anon.
      vii. “A true friend is one who knows his own faults well enough to forgive us ours.”   (Anon.)
      viii. “F” is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that crushes it.   Mark Twain

7. We have all noticed a lot of Jokes @ “F”.
   a. But “F” is not something those of us in Recovery take lightly – Why is that?   B/C “F” is God’s prescription for the broken hearted.
   b. No matter how great the offense or abuses of our life story – along the path of healing lies “F”.

8. OK, Everyone in this room knows that at the base (or root) of any compulsive or addictive behavior is PAIN – usually Buried Pain.
   a. We also learned weeks ago that pretending that the Pain isn’t there (or that it doesn’t bother you any more) will not solve your problems.
      i. Jeremiah 6:14 reminds us:
         1. “You can’t heal a wound by saying it’s not there!”
   b. Honestly facing your past AND Forgiving yourself & those who have hurt you is the only LASTING solution.
   c. “F” Breaks the cycle.
      i. It doesn’t settle all the questions of blame, justice, or fairness,   BUT it allows for healing.
9. Tonight look at 3 kinds of “F”:

a. 1st & most important: “F” which is Extended from God to US.
   i. HUGE Question here: HAVE YOU ACCEPTED GOD’S “F”? (pause for effect)
      1. Have you accepted Jesus’ work on the cross?
         a. By his death on the cross ALL our sins were “F”, paid in full.
         2. If you have not, then you are willfully hanging on to something that will
            ultimately kill you.
   ii. JC exclaimed on cross: DONE !!! It is finished. He wasn’t speaking (as some
       believe) about his life or his work here on earth.
      1. He was talking about the penalty of sin for all mankind. That it was over –
         DONE, finished.
   iii. AND how are our sins Forgiven? Simply – through our faith in Him.
   iv. John Baker said: “if God wasn’t willing to forgive sin, heaven would be empty.”

b. 2nd kind of “F” is: “F” which is extended from US to OTHERS.
   i. Another huge question: “HAVE YOU FORGIVEN OTHERS WHO HAVE HURT
      YOU?”
   ii. This is more of a process in our lives than the 1st type of “F” which is extended
      from God.
   iii. Your WILL enters the picture here.
      1. You Must let go of the pain of the past in order to be truly free.
   iv. Indeed – “F” is all about “Letting Go” (either direction)
      1. Remember playing Tug Of War as a kid?
         a. As long as people on both sides were “tugging” you have a war.
         b. You let go of your end of rope when you “F” others.
         c. No matter how hard they may tug on their end, if you released your
            end, the war is over - finished.
         d. BUT, as long as you hang onto that rope (un-forgiveness) you are a
            prisoner of war.
   v. Think for a moment here: Who is your anger (or your un-forgiveness) hurting
      most? It’s you.
      1. “F” allows you to become fully freed from your anger.
vi. Bible lot to say @ “F”:

1. **Rom 12:17**  
   “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”
   a. Causing an injury puts you below your enemy
   b. Avenging an injury makes you even with him.
   c. “F” the one who injured you sets you above him. **MORE IMP.** “F” sets you free!!!

vii. By the way: While we are on this 2nd type of “F” (forgiving others) you may recall your list of “Others To Forgive”. Well, you may have forgotten about someone you may need to forgive: God! Yes, God.

   1. **ASK:** Have you ever known someone who is angry w/God? ?? Have **YOU** ever been angry w/Him? IF so, you need to remember a few things:
      a. First: God’s very nature is marked by perfect holiness
      b. Then, remember that God is perfect in Love, Mercy, Grace
      c. AND finally, remember that He loves you so much that He gave you a free will.
         i. He didn’t want puppets
         ii. He wants our love for him to be **by our choice**
      d. Harm that others did to you was a result of their free choice – not God’s will.
      e. Bottom line: Understanding the idea of free will shows you that **anger toward God is misplaced anger.**
      f. **I Peter 5:10** puts this in perspective for us:
         i. “…after you have borne these sufferings a very little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to share in his eternal splendor through Christ, will himself make you whole and secure and strong.”
ii. If you have been victim of sexual abuse, physical abuse, childhood neglect, or spousal abuse – I am truly sorry for your pain. I hurt with you.

NOW, this may be difficult for some of you, but you will not find the peace and freedom from those who have hurt you until you FORGIVE them.

REMEMBER: Forgiving them in no way excuses what they have done, BUT it will release you from the power they have over you.

Someone once asked me: “What do you do if a person does not accept our forgiveness?” They might say: “I didn’t ask for your forgiveness so I don’t need it…” Well then all you can say is that regardless of whether or not they feel they need it or nor, you needed to do this for yourself – so that you could be rid of the bondage of un-forgiveness. It’s less about them and more about you and your health.

c. Third/final type of “F” is the need to **FORGIVE OURSELVES**: 
   i. Another HUGE question here: HAVE YOU FORGIVEN YOURSELF?
      1. For a lot of people forgiving others, even God, and accepting God’s “F” may be EASIER than forgiving yourself. You may feel that your past is too much to forgive. (remember the cross each year in CR at Easter)
      2. OK, This is what God wants to do w/darkness in your past:
         a. He says: “*Come, let’s talk this over! Says the Lord; no matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you white as wool! If you will only let me help you.*”
            Isaiah 1: 18-19
         b. No matter how unlovable or worthless you may feel, God loves you! On your worst day He’s crazy about you! HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOURSELF does **NOT change** His love for you **one bit !!!**
ii. I have a question for you: If God Himself can forgive you w/ultimate price of that Forgiveness being to sacrifice His own Son – How can you sit there and withhold Forgiveness from yourself ???  
   1. I agree w/Baker on this: We MUST forgive ourselves before we can forgive others. “F” is too big an issue to let it apply in one situation and not another.

iii. OK, Next week: We are going to work on the LIST of people you need to make AMENDS to.

iv. It’s important to know that the first name on your List of those to whom you need to make AMENDS should be God AND second should be yours. WHY???
   1. Answer found in Matt. 22:36-40: Jesus asks the question here:
      a. “Which is the most important command...? Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second most important is similar: Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.” (this is not a bad thing !)
      b. DO you see it? If we equate LOVE w/Forgiveness than it makes sense.
   2. So, How can you love or forgive your neighbor, if you can’t love or forgive yourself?
      a. People pick up on this too. They notice if you don’t forgive yourself - it makes them suspicious of whether you can truly forgive them.

v. Forgiving yourself (NOT assigning blame to someone else) so you are off the hook.
   1. SIMPLY: it is your acknowledgment that you are human like everyone else AND that you are at the point in your recovery where you are able and ready to give yourself greater respect.
d. NOW, as you take the necessary steps of “F” we’ve outlined here tonight; you will see that you are gradually letting go of Guilt – Shame.
   i. You can admit that you are not perfect
   ii. You can agree with God that you and God are working on you – together.
   iii. You can accept that you may still fall down, but with your Savior’s help you can get up, brush yourself off, and try again.

e. We can all say: “I forgive myself because God has already forgiven me, and with His help, I can forgive others.” (OK, SAY IT WITH ME THIS TIME – ON SCREEN)
   i. When you forgive yourself you don’t change the past, but you sure do change the future.

Dismiss to Open Share Groups (newcomers to room 304 with __________)