



FORGIVENESS...

Even When I Don't Want To

RMPP EVENT 30

EVENT SCHEDULE

Welcome and Zoom Etiquette

Opening Prayer

Speaker Introduction

Message: Forgiveness...Even When I Don't Want To

Breakout Groups

Q&A and Discussion

Connect Group Invitation

Closing Prayer



BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

The MST Project

www.themstproject.com

New Counseling Service

www.newcounselingservice.com

CONTENTS

<i>Forgiveness...Even When I Don't Want To</i>	4
<i>Devotional Introduction</i>	8
Why Do We Have To Forgive?	10
Why Is Forgiveness So Hard?	16
I Don't Want To!	22
I'll Forgive If...	28
Forgiveness Hurts, But Heals	34
What Will I Gain?	42
A Brief Review	48
<i>Pray and Fast For Your Wife</i>	52
<i>Introducing RMPP</i>	54
<i>Additional Resources</i>	62
<i>RMPP Connect Groups</i>	64

FORGIVENESS... EVEN WHEN I DON'T WANT TO

EVENT 30

Forgiveness is a powerful and freeing action, that is until it's time for you to do it. We can often come up with a myriad of excuses to not forgive, but what would your marriage, friendships, and relationships experience if you choose to forsake the excuses and instead pursue the reasons to forgive?

Scripture Reflection

Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat...Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the Lord." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone. - *Psalm 32:1-5 (NLT)*

How can you live a life of purity and holiness in an impure world?

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. - *Colossians 3:13 (NLT)*

Personal Reflection

1. How did you feel about forgiveness before and after becoming a Christian?
2. Who do you have the most difficulty forgiving?

Personal Application

1. What is your appropriate response to God's forgiveness of you? Do you need to make any changes in your life?
2. Can you justify not forgiving someone in your life? What will motivate you to forgive?

DEVOTIONAL INTRODUCTION

BY REX DEKONING

Forgiveness is the act of pardoning an offender. In the Bible, the Greek word translated as “forgiveness” literally means “to let go,” as when a person does not demand payment for a debt. Jesus used this comparison when he taught his followers to pray: “Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is in debt to us (Luke 11:14).” Likewise, in his parable of the unmerciful slave in Matthew 18:23-35, Jesus equated forgiveness with canceling a debt.

When my sister held things against me, she did not even want to explain why, and ended up carrying that load for several years. I did not even know how I had offended her, but I clearly had. After several years, I decided to let go of that burden by forgiving her for her accusations against me, whatever they may have been. It did not mean that our relationship improved much, but I did not have to carry the burden of guilt anymore. I had certainly offended her, but by forgiving her I freed myself from guilt and resentment. We forgive others when we let go of resentment and give up claim to any compensation for the

hurt or loss we have suffered. 'Love keeps no record of wrongs', according to 1 Corinthians 13:5. So the next time I meet my sister, our arguments from the past will no longer play out

Forgiveness does not mean that I condone every behavior that is harmful or bad. It also does not mean that I pretend as if nothing has happened. Forgiving does not mean forgetting. But I will not allow the facts or feelings against the other person affect me anymore.

Forgiving is most often a life-long process. However, forgiveness must begin somewhere at some point in time. There will undoubtedly be a moment, an act, when you decisively choose to forgive. It may well be highly emotional and spiritually intense and bring immediate relief--a sense of release and freedom. But that doesn't necessarily mean you'll never need to do it again.

Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" - Ephesians 4:32

WHY DO WE HAVE TO FORGIVE?

DEVOTIONAL 1

The Bible is not silent on the topic of forgiveness; as a believer, you are commanded to do so and often. So what can you learn from God's Word to help you obey this important command and set an example for others in the process?

Unity and reconciliation are major themes throughout the Bible, but neither are possible without forgiveness. Divided we fall, united we stand. Our enemy knows this and seeks to divide and conquer.

Asking for forgiveness trains you in humility and God loves a contrite heart. Forgiving our debtors heals relationships by reconciling friends, children and spouses. As children of God, we receive continual forgiveness, so we need to be continually forgiving. The first to apologise is the bravest. The first to forgive is the strongest and the first to forget is the happiest.

You don't need to think about the topic of forgiveness for very long before you see just how crucial a battleground it is.

When Jesus taught us how to pray, He instructed us to ask God to forgive us our debts on the basis that we forgive our debtors. This is a precondition. He assumed we would do this because He knew that whenever we hang onto the bitterness that always results from unforgiveness, we are scoring an own goal. You are handing the enemy his victory on a plate. Jesus knew He was on the winning team and wants us to be too. He knows just how crucial forgiveness is.

But what exactly is forgiveness? Forgiveness is the willingness to assume a debt instead of claiming one. Jesus on the cross is the best example of this. He assumed our debt and paid for our sins. In the garden of Eden, we see the first blood sacrifice that covered debt. On the cross we see the last blood sacrifice that pays for and removes our debt. How is Jesus able to assume our debt? He is the King of Kings. He can go to the heavenly vault and pay for our debt from inexhaustible kingdom riches.

We are using the word debt here so let's think of this on a purely financial level for a moment. Let's imagine that you have a very expensive, tailor-made, hand-fitted business suit from Saville Row or an upscale tailor. For some reason, a friend

needs to borrow it and so you lend him your suit. When he has finished with it and returns the suit it's totally ruined. It's ripped and burned. Thousands of pounds lost. Will you forgive him or not? Let's think only about the financial aspect here, not the feelings. Will you forgive and say, "Forget it. No problem," in which case you assume the debt? Or will you withhold forgiveness and say, "You owe me a new suit."

What's the main thing that will determine whether you forgive or not? Remember, we are only thinking financially. The main thing is your net worth. If you are rich, you'll just say, "Forget it." You know you can easily replace it. But what if you're out of work and it's your only suit? You have all sorts of incredibly important job interviews coming up. You'll be totally out of money if you don't get one of those jobs. What do you say? "I'd like to forgive you, but I can't. You're going to need to pay for this. I need a suit." It's as simple as that. *

In Matthew 16 Jesus tells us to store up treasure, not here on earth for expensive suits, but in heaven. In Luke 12 Jesus tells us to store up treasure in heaven for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. If Jesus is your treasure, it is to Him that you will turn when you are wronged, hurt, abused or slandered etc. You have access to heaven's inexhaustible riches and can make withdrawals as often as you need and for any amount.

This is what makes it possible to forgive, no matter how large the debt. The degree to which Christ is your treasure is the degree to which you will forgive. And when you do you find yourself clothed in a new white suit, a robe of righteousness. Forgiveness is motivated by love and inextricably tied to sacrifice. God so loved the world that He gave (sacrificed) His only son (John 3:16). God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their sins against them (2 Corinthians 5:19).

The most effective way to wage spiritual warfare is to forgive more quickly, more fully and more freely. It is perhaps the one act that allows us to truly reflect our maker. And just as His act towards us restores the relationship and makes abundant life possible, imitating Him can do the same for your friendships, your paternity and your marriage. What are you waiting for?

Nick is a husband and father who completed the Pathway to Purity program in 2013. He has been blessed and privileged to be a part of The MST Project since then, particularly with RMPP. He has lived in Thailand for 26 years and loves studying God's word.

*** Adapted from 'Shame & Grace – Scenes of Forgiveness'
by Timothy Keller 1997**

Think About It

1. Do you struggle with forgiveness? Why/why not?
2. Who is most affected by the bitterness that unforgiveness produces and why?
3. Why do we often struggle to forgive and how can we train ourselves to forgive more quickly, fully and freely?

Read

2 Corinthians 4:6-7

Reflect on This

“You’ll never touch so the ocean of God’s love as that you forgive your enemies.” - *Corrie ten Boom*

WHY IS FORGIVENESS SO HARD?

DEVOTIONAL 2

Many of us want to be quickly forgiven when we do something wrong or hurtful, but we can find it hard to forgive others just as quickly for similar infractions. What keeps you from extending forgiveness easily and quickly?

To be alive is to experience pain - including that internal ache, or anger, or confusion, or bitterness that can so easily come from feeling misunderstood, unfairly blamed or overlooked by someone who matters to you. Maybe you have been on the receiving end of harsh words or have even been physically assaulted. Every one of us has experienced (at some point in our lives!) pain that we are pretty sure is someone else's "fault!"

For many of us this may have happened early on, while growing up at home. Maybe our moms and dads were absent, mean, or just didn't understand us. If we don't remember being hurt by our parents, then perhaps it was with brothers or sisters - or

even among schoolmates or friends - and for some of us each one of these situations can stir up painful memories.

So what? Why start with pain? Why bother even thinking about what's in the past? Because if we want to truly be free, if we want to truly forgive, we need to recognize that one of the most significant reasons we don't forgive is self-protection. If I touch a hot stove, I instinctively pull back. Sometimes I try it again, but until I burn up my nerve endings, I cannot help but withdraw from pain. The default setting of our hearts is to do the same thing! There are so many ways we self-protect: thinking we are better than other people, we act aloof or withdraw, we choose humor or sarcasm rather than sharing what we are really thinking or feeling, and...unforgiveness. All of them are simply ways to put a barrier between our hearts and the possibility of being hurt by those whom we do not trust.

When asked by one of His friends how many times we should forgive someone close to us, Jesus gave a surprising answer... not just seven times (the number suggested to Jesus, which sounds pretty generous in the eyes of the world, yeah?) but seventy-seven times! (Matthew 18:21-22). Really, Lord? "But you don't know what they did to me...you don't understand how wicked they are..."

We may not want to forgive because what they may have done was really, really bad. Maybe we feel like they don't deserve forgiveness. Maybe we are afraid that if we forgive, they will feel like they can do it again, or do it to someone else! All of which makes a lot of sense. It may even be objectively true. And yet, Jesus...

...Jesus shares that the one who has been forgiven much loves much. He commands us to forgive our enemies, going so far as to compare that sort of forgiveness with the perfection of His Father. And Jesus doesn't just teach about forgiveness, he does it! Once He did it from a place of greatest pain: "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing!" Even though it is pretty likely that at least some of those who were wounding Jesus understood exactly that they were inflicting great pain, leading to death.

We ourselves can be guilty of many scenarios: Father, forgive me, I didn't understand what I was doing! I didn't mean it that way! I was really tired/stressed. I don't want to think about the tears my self-focused choice just provoked in my wife. Let's not dwell on how my child is scared of my temper. Or how rude I just was, reacting to my mother's honest and true suggestion on how I might be a bit more thoughtful. Father forgive me!

But when my wife says something in a way I don't like (again).

Or my child immediately disobeys (again). Or my mom corrects me (again). Or my friend forgets to include me (again)...What then...?

...Then we remember the story that Jesus told to that brother asking about how many times to forgive. We remember that in our unforgivable debt we have already been forgiven. Jesus does not protect himself from us. And while it can cost us a lot to forgive (again), we can always return to Jesus to receive more love, more healing, more patience, more kindness, more gentleness, more self-control, more goodness, more truth, more of whatever it is that we need to extend His character and love to those who have hurt us.

When we choose to self-protect by not forgiving it is like putting a hot pad or a kitchen glove on our heart - remember the stove? But guess what, even though we may not feel (as much) pain, we also inhibit the amount of love that we are able to receive. Becoming vulnerable to love is the other alternative. Before reading and responding to the questions, please read Matthew 18:21-35 aloud together.

Iven is still learning how to be himself! He has lots of help from Jesus, his kids, lovely wife, ministry teammates and neighbors as he lives and serves under YWAM Thailand with "Rak Teh" on the streets of Old Bangkok.

Think About It

1. What are some things that you know God has already forgiven you for? Is there anything you aren't sure about yet, but really would like to be forgiven of? How many times have you already experienced His forgiveness?
2. Who is it that is really hard for you to forgive? Is there anyone that you feel like you "should forgive" but just really don't want to right now?
3. What sort of promise of care from Jesus would you need to feel like you had enough resources to truly forgive (release from their debt of pain to you) whomever it is you find hard to forgive? Can you ask Him first for those resources? Then, in Jesus' name, speak out forgiveness over those who have come to mind, fully releasing them from any emotional, physical, or historical debt of pain that you feel like they may still owe to you.

I DON'T WANT TO!

DEVOTIONAL 3

The choice to forgive may not be easy, but it isn't impossible. And the biggest obstacle to forgiving others isn't your inability to do so but the root of bitterness you may be holding onto. Isn't it time to let go of that root?

In 2006, there was a horrific crime where a shooter barricaded himself in a one-room schoolhouse with 10 young Amish girls and shot them, killing 5 and wounding the other 5. It is said that before the blood was even dry, the Amish community forgave the killer and his family. As the father of a slain girl said, "Our forgiveness was not our words, it was what we did."

Why we forgive

For most people, a decision to forgive comes, if ever, at the end of a long emotional journey that may stretch over months, if not years. Many, if not most, assume that forgiveness is for the perpetrator - as if it's releasing them from their guilt and their punishment. That assumption is wrong. Instead, extending

forgiveness is for the victim. Forgiveness means giving up the right to revenge and leaving vengeance in the hands of God. Although it does not eliminate the possible long emotional journey of healing, it prevents the blackness of vengeance and retaliation and hatred from taking root in your heart that could be lifelong and generational as experienced by the famous Hatfield and McCoy Feud that became American folklore because of it.

While Jesus paid for all our sins, God honors our free will, and the law of cause and effect stands. God does not remove the consequences. Depending on the severity of the crime, the perpetrator may spend his life in jail, be alienated from his family, be hunted or worse. The Old Testament speaks of the establishment of the Cities of Refuge for those trying to escape retaliation by the victims.

Forgiveness seems trivial until it's personal

Most of us, if not all of us, will never experience this extreme situation. However, we daily encounter a myriad of trivial offenses, slights, prejudices, insults; we hear half a conversation that can often be misconstrued, even our own selfishness or someone else's can escalate a situation and the list goes on and many times, as the saying goes, we make mountains out of molehills. These cause us to feel unsettled, vexed, we want to get even and often want to hit back verbally

or worse. God wants and desires for His children who often forget that his Shekinah Glory dwells in them, that their hearts should be a place of peace, joy, love, and a heart that is always forgiving. But that happy place can dissolve into frustration and irritation that leads to anger and retaliation that is not easily restored. Forgiveness involving a stranger is one side of the coin, but forgiveness involving a loved one is the other. The English poet from the Middle Ages Geoffrey Chaucer coined the phrase, ‘familiarity breeds contempt,’ and it happens when we easily find fault after years of living with each other. I once saw a sign that read, ‘everyone seems normal until you get to know them.’

This sign reflects my life. I was a functional, educated, hardworking well-dressed man but due to childhood abandonment and abuse I struggled with a hidden addiction to pornography my whole life, even during two marriages. After 25 years, my current wife has had enough. I don’t think I have ever said it, but I have thought it: “You have to forgive me, the Bible says 70 X 7.” Within the family we forgive things, the spilt milk, the chores not done, a harsh word; but the game changes when there are multiple infractions or serious breaches of trust or ones that involve addictions which can span many years. In Matthew 18:21-22 Peter asked, “How many times should we forgive?” We all want an exact number before we stop forgiving a person or where forgiveness seems to have no

apparent effect. Jesus' real response was...you don't stop.

The forgiveness was not for me but for my wife

Remember, forgiveness is for the victim, the wounded. My addiction was ruining my life and my marriage, and I truly regret to this day all the pain I had caused her. But as difficult as it was, my wife had to learn to forgive me. Remember, forgiveness is for the victim, the wounded. It's to restore and help maintain peace and joy and love and leave the vengeance to God. It is said that 'the acid of bitterness eats the container that holds it.' It simmers and stews within us and robs us of the joy that should be ours. It's like eating the rat poison hoping it kills the other person who wronged us.

A bitter pill

It is important to know that forgiving does not mean that you must restore an abuser or a perpetual addictive person, or someone who committed adultery or some other grievous sin. However, remember that for all the sins that plague our lives, God covers us with forgiveness and grace. In knowing that, extending forgiveness and grace, which is undeserved, opens the door for reconciliation and restoration. Are you opening the door, or keeping it closed?

Les is a 66-year-old Christian who studied theology for the simple need to know God's heart for him. For the last 25 years, he has worked as a nurse in open heart surgery in the United States.

Think About It

1. Have you ever had your peace that comes from God vanish from trivial interactions with strangers, i.e., other drivers, insults, inconsiderate people, etc.?
2. Have you had to forgive someone, but you didn't know that it was for you?
3. Have you been forgiven but still faced the consequence?

Read

Mark 11:25

Reflect on This

“The voice of sin is loud, but the voice of forgiveness is louder.”
- *Dwight L. Moody*

I'LL FORGIVE IF...

DEVOTIONAL 4

When everything in you wants to say to someone, “I will forgive you if...”, the cross can remind you of what you have received through Christ. It is then that you can say, “I forgive you because...”.

As believers, forgiving others should be easier than it often is. After all, we have been forgiven by a holy and loving God. Should we not want to pay that tremendous gift forward to anyone, anywhere, all the time? Of course, we may say we want to, but one thing consistently stands in our way to doing so, and that is our human nature. The sinfulness and brokenness of our human nature are in a constant tug of war with God's spiritual commands for us as His children. One of the most straightforward ways we see this played out is by attaching a human stipulation to a spiritual command. In this case, the spiritual command is to forgive others as we have been forgiven

(Ephesians 4:32, Matthew 6:14-15, Colossians 3:13, Luke 6:37, Matthew 18:21-22, Mark 11:25, Proverbs 17:9, Daniel 9:9). A human stipulation uses any reason or excuse (no matter how good it sounds) to keep oneself from obeying God's commands. And despite the spiritual command to forgive, we can often side with the human stipulations that sound like,

- "I will forgive you if..."
- "I will forgive you when..."
- "I will forgive you only..."
- "I won't forgive unless..."

When we choose to hold onto the human stipulations that prolong the spiritual commands to forgive, we put ourselves in the middle of the hurt, the pain, the offense, and the "unforgivable," when actually, forgiveness and healing happen when we invite Christ to be in the middle of all of that we are going through or have gone through. Human stipulations can often be rooted in pride, selfishness, stubbornness, and rebelliousness. And I believe that is why God commands us to forgive because He knows these unholy roots will only serve to poison and deaden our connection with Him and others. Unforgiveness is a fire that needs to be put out, not fanned into greater flames.

The only one who has a legitimate reason to put a stipulation on forgiveness is God Himself, and He doesn't, even though He has every right to! The facts are that God's primary characteristic is holiness (Isaiah 6:3), and sin does not exist in His presence. Because of our sinful nature, we are separated from God (Isaiah 59:2). The only way to be reconciled to God is through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26) and the redeeming work of Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb. But here is the truth that always humbles me - God knows all things, at all times, for all time, and He knows full well that not everyone will accept the gift of salvation offered through Christ. And yet, Christ still came. God did not withhold forgiveness or attach a stipulation to it. God could have said, "I'll send Christ if...or when...or only...or unless." He doesn't say any of that; instead, we can read the following from His Word,

"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." - John 3:16

In this verse, one word guides us in moving away from attaching human stipulation to forgiveness to walking in spiritual obedience in forgiving. And that word is love. God shows love by offering forgiveness through Christ. Christ shows love

by being obedient to God's will. And you, a man of God, can show love to others through obeying the spiritual commands of God's Word and forgive those who have hurt you, offended you, disappointed you, etc. So now, what "right" do you have to withhold forgiveness towards others? None.

We are given a command to forgive others, and to obey that command requires our hearts to be rooted in perfect love and not based on human stipulation. Love doesn't make forgiveness easier; it makes it possible. It is love for God and love for others that will allow you to say, "I forgive you because..."

Christian is the founder and director of The MST Project, a ministry that seeks to mentor men into a pursuit of sexual purity and greater spiritual wholeness. Christian has lived in Thailand for over 20 years and resides in Bangkok with his wife.

Think About It

1. What human stipulations are you holding onto that keep you from forgiving others?
2. Are you willing to grow in love towards those who have hurt you, offended you, disappointed you, etc.?
3. List some ways your church men's group, weekly connect group, or brother in the faith, can help guide you away from unforgiveness and towards healing, wholeness, and Christlike love.

Read

1 Peter 4:8

Reflect on This

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.” - *C.S. Lewis*

FORGIVENESS HURTS, BUT HEALS

DEVOTIONAL 5

Forgiving others does not mean that you forget what someone has done to you, but without it first, you will find it nearly impossible to move forward in life. When you let go of the hurt, you can begin to pursuing healing.

Hello, dear child of God. My name is Stephen and in this devotional, I'd like to pray with you in the presence of God, as I believe he has a message for both of us. Please join me:

Dear Creator, I praise you for who you are. You are loving compassionate, you are the pioneer of our faith, you know what is helpful and what is hurtful, and you want to help us. I pray you've brought us together for a special purpose, whether we've already met you, or we're seeking you. God, I pray that tonight is different, that we can share what we thought was un-shareable with great relief. I pray for us to be vulnerable, and teachable. Please teach us how to be better receivers of forgiveness, in Jesus' name, amen.

In this devotional let me share with you my story of my first love with the Lord, and what He has taught me about forgiveness. “Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.” - Luke 23:34

I was hugging a toilet bowl with the door locked behind me. I was naked, vomiting for hours, and half conscious. I had been drugged, blacked in and out of wakefulness, and had begun denying I was just raped by another man. Four years later, and I was riddled with flashbacks every few seconds, memory lapses, mood swings, and was eventually diagnosed with clinical PTSD.

This is the first lesson in forgiveness I began to learn: acknowledging the facts of how someone hurt me. A small group of open honest, vulnerable men of God helped me process my grief and acknowledge pain so I could move on. God showed me his kindness for a year so I could feel safe enough to get to know him. My heart was healing. Then I started doubting Jesus, but I kept going to church, believing in the Father. It was exactly at that point that I opened up to my pastor about my story and received real empathy and instruction. The next night I would be tested by Satan. I shared my story with an older family friend, then we drank until I got drunk; he urged me to do a line of cocaine and I said no several times, but in

the end, I acquiesced out of fear. I felt complete betrayal, not just in him, but in myself because I thought I was stronger. We drove to a strip club, and I began to pray for help in Jesus' name for the first time. God answered my prayer immediately with two outstretched arms. One was my friend's leading into the strip club; the other, a homeless person asking for change. I chose to give all the cash I had, \$10, to the homeless person. Miraculously, all night long, my friend tried getting me into strip clubs and the bouncers kept denying us. God had closed a door no man will open, in Jesus' name! Later the next day I called my pastor, confessed, repented, and felt the warmth of God again, and his forgiveness.

My Pastor told me something very important after that. He told me the next step after my apology (repentance), after God's acknowledgement of my transgression (forgiveness), he told me, "You know this doesn't affect your ability to serve the church again." God was showing me how we are to reconcile with each other. That meant the world to me as all the fear rushed in as I began to think how we would be gathering for an annual formal event called Vision Builders. I thought "no one is going to believe me... Jesus, I can feel you... please speak to me in your Word." I opened the Bible to a random page, and was led to 1 John 4:13-18:

“This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so, we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement: in this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

Now I was beginning to see how the invisible God was becoming visible to me in Jesus' way. His way is forgiveness not just to the paralyzed victim that I identified as, the one easy to forgive...but He forgave how small I thought He was, and that I could rely on my own good choices to save me, which is otherwise known as self-salvation. God saved me from being the self-righteous enemy and showed me in a way only I could know I stood alone with him. Now I was beginning to see what receiving the forgiveness from my offender's point of view felt like - humbling.

We all know the verse where Jesus says if you don't forgive your brother, God won't forgive you (Matthew 6:15).

But maybe you struggle with the same issue I had, where it's easy to give others grace and forgiveness, but hard to receive forgiveness from God. Or you wonder if you even need forgiveness because you're doing everything perfectly, living a good and clean life. But is it a holy life? Paul writes "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4 NIV) By denying what Jesus did on the cross, and the forgiveness for our sins, we deny the faith entirely.

As Jesus stated in John 7:47, a forgiven life is obvious: "I tell you, her sins - and they are many - have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love." So, friends, this leaves us with a question: what has He forgiven you of?

Stephen is a follower of Yeshua, Jesús, Yasu, also known as our beloved Jesus. He lives in Toronto, Canada, and is often in an undisclosed forest singing to God, climbing a building for work, or gathering around a fire with friends.

Think About It

1. What would life look like if following Jesus felt easy? What is weighing me down that I'd like to give to Jesus?
2. What is one unresolved memory or story in the back of my mind that continues to pester me? How can I invite Jesus into that memory?
3. It's your turn to be heard. Write down what you believe God or others could never forgive you of. Now ask God and the others for forgiveness.

Read

Isaiah 43:25

Reflect on This

“Forgiveness is the giving, and so the receiving, of life.” -
George Macdonald

WHAT WILL I GAIN?

DEVOTIONAL 6

Asking for forgiveness can be challenging for many men to do, for doing so can dent our pride, impact our ego, and point out our selfishness. But when you let go of these things, you gain the trust, respect, and honor of those closest to you. Is there anything more important than this?

Forgiveness? What's in it for me?

It is morning. Yesterday is gone and today starts...maybe. I don't know what your morning routine is, but my day starts with a fight. To be my most productive self I should get out of bed, read, study, pray, and exercise. I don't need to watch a motivational video to know this. I don't need another super achiever, another Navy Seal, or another famous rich person to tell me this. I know getting out of bed will benefit me. I have seen the results; I have preached the results. I truly believe in the benefits of waking early. I even had the Bible give me a specific warning against laziness. Proverbs

24:33-34, in summary, states: get out of bed if you want to be productive, keep sleeping and your basic needs will not be met. Knowing the benefits does not guarantee or even predict the result. Knowing the benefits and believing does not make the choice to wake early an easy choice.

This devotion asks, *“What will I gain if I forgive?”*

Only an immature person would ask or even consider this question. Certainly, we should forgive because it’s right, and we need no other reason. Correct?

Thankfully, God the Father knows his sons, and knows how pathetic and selfish we can be. I will offer two passages from the Bible. Both appeal to our base nature and in fact answer the question, “What will I gain if I forgive?” Matthew 5:7 (NIV) “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” And then the passage, from “The Lord’s Prayer”- that should settle this issue once and for all. Matthew 6:14-15 (The Message) states, “In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can’t get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God’s part.”

This is the ‘mic drop’ moment. The moment I encourage you to soak in this passage and meditate on this passage. I think this verse is horrifying! I want to be forgiven. I NEED forgiveness! But I didn’t know God set up some equation to encourage me to forgive others. I am mature in years, but I did not hear what this verse was saying to me until decades and decades of my life passed. When I really read it, when I heard it for the first time, I set out to disprove it. There is no way Jesus meant what He said. It can’t really intend me to believe I am only forgiven if I extend mercy and forgiveness as well. I was angry. This is not what I was told. God loves me unconditionally and only requires I believe. I will admit, I am still uncomfortable with Matthew 6:14-15, because it clearly states I have work to do. Hard work. My anger surrounding this verse has subsided and has been replaced with a daily reminder of how important forgiveness is to God. My best guess is that God designed this equation for two primary reasons: It is of utmost importance to God, and it is needed because forgiveness is not my default and there are times when I need a substantial reason to forgive. Paradox is a word I love and reflect on daily. Life through death, growth following pain, victory despite defeat, peace in turmoil. May we add, forgiven when forgiving?

Brothers, this is not easy. It is not a ‘one and done’ task. One successful forgiveness does not determine the quickness or

ease with which we forgive the next offense. My goal is to fight less with myself in the morning and let discipline and positive habits dictate my actions instead of the softness of the pillow or bed. The same must be said about forgiveness. It is my goal that forgiveness, through discipline and obedience, becomes a habit and my default. I pray that this is your desire and goal as well.

David is God's child. Absurdly imperfect, but is tucked into Christ, pursuing God and truly wanting to follow the Holy Spirit.

Think About It

1. When did you realize the connection between forgiving, and you being forgiven? (Matthew 6:14-15)
2. Knowing we should forgive, what stops you from forgiving?
3. How many times, before communion or giving your offering to God, have you gone to your brother and forgiven him or asked forgiveness? Don't you think you should? (Matthew 5:23-24)

Read

Micah 7:18-19

Reflect on This

“Forgiveness is the only way to break the cycle of blame—and pain—in a relationship...It does not settle all questions of blame and justice and fairness...But it does allow relationships to start over. In that way, said Solzhenitsyn, we differ from all animals. It is not our capacity to think that makes us different, but our capacity to repent, and to forgive.” – *Philip Yancey*

A BRIEF REVIEW

DEVOTIONAL 7

During this connect group cycle, we pray that you have been challenged, encouraged, and inspired as you pursue greater purity and wholeness in your life. We want to encourage you to take some time to reflect on the last six devotionals and see how you can consistently apply in your life the many truths that have been shared.

Devotional 1

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 2

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 3

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 4

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 5

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

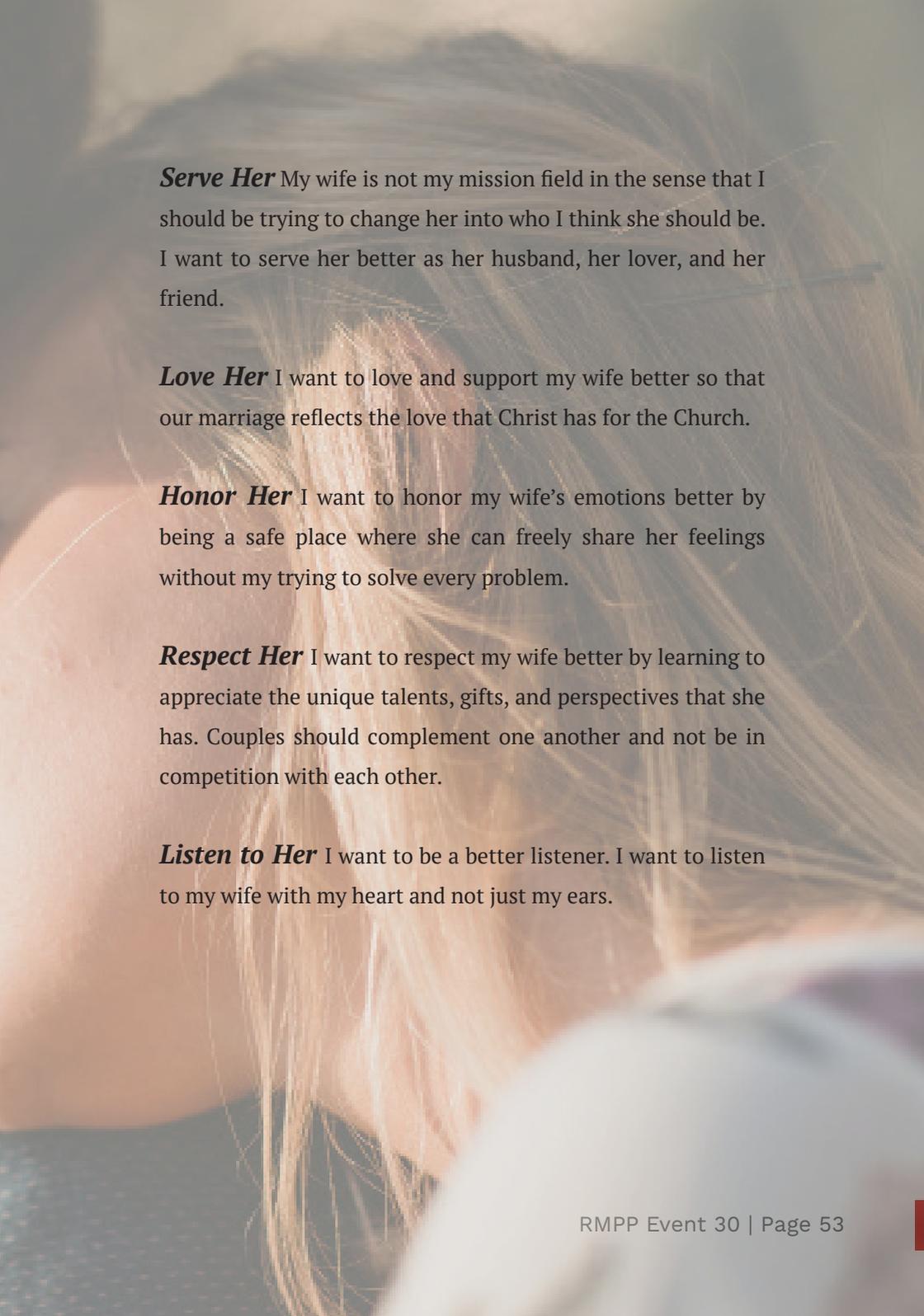
Devotional 6

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.



FAST & PRAY FOR YOUR WIFE

At any time this month, fast a meal and pray for one or all of the following points. As husbands commit to praying and fasting for their wives, we will see a great spiritual breakthrough take place and a spiritual legacy will be created.



Serve Her My wife is not my mission field in the sense that I should be trying to change her into who I think she should be. I want to serve her better as her husband, her lover, and her friend.

Love Her I want to love and support my wife better so that our marriage reflects the love that Christ has for the Church.

Honor Her I want to honor my wife's emotions better by being a safe place where she can freely share her feelings without my trying to solve every problem.

Respect Her I want to respect my wife better by learning to appreciate the unique talents, gifts, and perspectives that she has. Couples should complement one another and not be in competition with each other.

Listen to Her I want to be a better listener. I want to listen to my wife with my heart and not just my ears.

INTRODUCING RMPP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

| *What Is RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity (RMPP) is a community of men who are committed to growing in integrity, purity and wholeness through relevant teachings, accountability, mentoring and honest dialogue. You might not be sure that you really need to be part of a community like this because you don't struggle with compulsive addictions or sexual sin. While it is very important for many men to focus primarily on resisting sexual temptation and sin, we want to inspire and challenge you to pursue more. Although growing in purity is a big part of the vision for RMPP, it's much more than that. It's also learning about deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment with like-minded brothers. We believe that when we invite Him into these areas, He will extend His healing hand and bring about wholeness.

RMPP - Real Men
Pursuing Purity
Est. 2014

Max Lucado says this very well.

‘Our Savior kneels down and gazes upon the darkest acts of our lives. But rather than recoil in horror, he reaches out in kindness and says, “I can clean that if you want.”

We are men who are not willing to settle for a life of spiritual mediocrity. We choose to relentlessly pursue greater depths of purity and wholeness for ourselves and for our families. Welcome to the RMPP community.

| ***How does RMPP support the local church?***

RMPP does not intend to replace or represent a church; it only creates a safe place for men who want to stay active in their own church community. When a man joins the RMPP community he joins other like-minded men who desire to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. He is choosing to walk out in greater honesty and vulnerability. He is choosing to pursue

purity in all aspects of his life. Aspects such as deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment.

We then pray that as these men grow in greater maturity that they would influence their families. That they would impact their communities and their work places, and that they would be an example for other men in their home church. We believe that as men take hold of the awesome and holy call to live lives that reflect Christ, that the church will be inspired and the world will take notice.

| *What happens next?*

If you have ever attended a men's retreat, you probably remember being deeply impacted by worship, challenged by teaching, and being in community with many men who shared your excitement and enthusiasm for growth and change. A few weeks or months down the road, the gathering became a distant memory as you settled back into the routines of daily life.

We don't want to create just another mountain top experience. We are committed to creating a long-term mentoring relationship for everyone who attends an event. That is why you are holding this devotional book in your hands. As you flip through these pages you will see that there devotionals with corresponding questions. Each devotional is meant to solidify the teaching of the event by encouraging and challenging you, as well as helping to stimulate discussion through thought provoking questions, verses and quotes.

| ***Who writes the devotionals?***

Ministry leaders, pastors and members of a local church body have written these devotionals and have overcome real issues in their life through God's grace, goodness, mercy and love. We hope and pray that their testimonies and stories inspire, challenge and point you to Christ.

| ***What are RMPP connect groups?***

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue both purity and wholeness within an environment of peer support and encouragement. The journey to greater purity and wholeness is a journey that involves inviting other men to walk alongside of you. It is a place where you can share your prayer requests, victories, and struggles and where you can be heard,

prayed for and challenged to grow in all areas of life. A connect group is designed to be a support system for you for as long as you want.

Committing to a group may be difficult but we believe that you will be willing to make that commitment because you want something deeper. You want to know that you aren't alone and that there are other men who want the same thing and are willing to pursue that with you. During your time in a connect group you will be:

Challenged: You will be challenged to grow in your love for Biblical truth. The men in your group will challenge you to grow in your knowledge and application of God's Word thereby enabling you to stand firm in the midst of life's trials.

Encouraged: You will be encouraged to persevere when life, work, and numerous responsibilities may seem overwhelming. The men in your group will support you through prayer, encouragement and a listening ear.

Inspired: You will be inspired to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. While pursuing Christ-likeness may not always be easy, it will also be worth it. The men in your group will be there to inspire you on that journey.

Accountable: The men in your group, as well as your group leader, will support you and hold you accountable as you pursue greater freedom and victory. Be assured that whatever you share in your group will be strictly confidential.

| *When are the events held?*

RMPP events are held 4x a year in February, May, August, and November. Currently, RMPP events are held in-person as well as online via Zoom.

| *Who can attend?*

RMPP events are open to all men everywhere.

| *What about privacy?*

Because of the sensitive nature of RMPP events, video or audio recording is not allowed. Also, details of personal testimonies are NOT to be published via email, social media, or in any other form. Thank you for contributing to a safe and secure environment that helps build honesty and vulnerability.

| *Who started RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity was founded in 2014. RMPP is a joint initiative of The MST Project and New Counseling Service.

Christian Lenty is the founder and director of The MST Project, a ministry that seeks to mentor men into a pursuit of sexual purity and greater spiritual wholeness. Christian has lived in Thailand for over 20 years and resides in Bangkok with his wife.

Rex DeKoning is the 60-year old husband and father of a large family. A former nurse and pastor, he now works in Thailand with New Counseling Service as a counselor. Rex has experienced great healing of addictive behaviors after he confessed everything and began to live an accountable life. Rex is highly motivated to inspire other men to seek out a mentor, as it has helped him to walk freely, build honesty and vulnerability.

Nick Chilver is married and is part of a blended family containing 6 children. He is grateful for the people God has brought into his life and across his path. And as he continues to learn to better reflect Him, it is his prayer that God will grant him the privilege of helping others on the path to freedom and into the Light. He resides in Thailand with his wife.

Roger Mitiska and his wife are retired and living in Thailand. They are members of Evangelical Church of Bangkok. Greatly blessed by God, Roger desires to be used by Him to assist others in walking with Jesus. Roger's passion is Christian discipleship through understanding God's Word and applying it to everyday living.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

& ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

| *New Counseling Service*

New Counseling Service provides counseling and therapy for individuals and families in Bangkok. NCS provides services for expatriates as well as for Thai people.

W: www.ncs-counseling.com

E: newcounselingservice@gmail.com

| *A Pathway To Purity*

The book, A Pathway to Purity, is meant to transform your way of thinking about purity, taking you through an initial 16 sessions of encouraging, challenging and application of the material. Pathway to Purity will transform the way you think and live, putting you on a lifetime path of purity and wholeness leading to consistent victory.

W: www.mstproject.com/p2p

E: hello@themstproject.com

For more information about
RMPP, please send us an email
at hello@themstproject.com

| *With Gratitude*

We would like say thank you to the following for their
contribution to this event:

Financial Donors, Thank you for generously providing the
funding for this event.

Devotional Authors, Thank you for writing devotionals that
inspire, encourage and challenge each of us to pursue greater
purity and spiritual wholeness.

| *Scriptural Oversight Team*

Real Men Pursuing Purity has a Scriptural Oversight Team
consisting of several pastors from local churches that review
all devotionals for theological integrity.



JOIN AN RMPP CONNECT GROUP TODAY

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue both purity and wholeness within an environment of peer support and encouragement.

A photograph of two men in a meeting, with a cityscape visible through a large window in the background. The man on the left is wearing glasses and a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt. The man on the right is seen in profile, wearing glasses and a dark suit jacket. The background shows a dense urban landscape with many buildings under a bright sky.

***RMPP connect groups are held on a weekly basis.
To inquire about joining a group or to find out
more information please email
rmpp@mstproject.com.***

If you are interested in starting an RMPP connect group, please send an email to hello@themstproject.com. We'd love to support you in this and have resources to help you.

AUGUST 2021