

**OBSERVATION** -- As a group, talk through and summarize the passage. Think through *Who, What, Where, When, How, and Why* questions together.

**INTERPRETATION** -- Answer these questions together:

**1. What does this passage teach us about us?**

- a) Read Prv.17:9: How have you experienced growth in love and restoration by pursuing forgiveness?
- b) Pst Akin pointed out that forgiveness does not require that we forget the offense but that we refrain from bringing up the offense in our interaction with others or the offender. Therefore, how have you experienced relational separation and isolation when past offenses are always referenced?

**2. What does this passage teach us about God?**

- a) Given Exo 34:6-7, we find God proclaiming his majesty and identity. Discuss the identity of God as declared in the passage.
- b) As believers, how does knowing God's mercy and justice help us approach him when we offend him? (Read Ps. 86:5,130:3-4; 103:3-4)
- c) Pst Akin mentioned, "Unforgiveness reveals how much you don't know about God's forgiveness." As believers, how does knowing the mercy and justice of God help strengthen us to forgive others? (Read Lk. 17:3-4 & Mk. 11:25)

**3. What does this passage teach us about grace/salvation? How does it point to Christ?**

- a) Pst. Akin stated, "God is not in the business of making people nice, but new." How has God fulfilled both mercy and justice in Christ? (Read 2 Cor. 5:16-21).
- b) Pst. Akin pointed out that in Christ, believers are not only forgiven people but forgiving people. How does the death and resurrection of Christ motivate the believer's forgiveness of others?
- c) Pst Akin indicated, "The cross is a model for how to forgive others." How does the cross motivate us to "cover offenses" and "seek restoration"? How does the cross refrain us from continually referencing past offenses with an offender? (Check Mat. 18:21-35).

**APPLICATION**

- a) The cross demonstrates a painful and costly process toward forgiveness (1 Pet. 1:18-21). Forgiveness is not a *therapeutic or passive gesture* but an *active process* of confronting sin/offense and seeking restoration through faith in Christ. Think through and discuss the following mindsets toward the active process of forgiveness:
  1. Forgiveness is not a feeling; we can forgive by faith despite our feelings.
  2. Forgiveness is not to forget; we can seek continuous fellowship regardless of remembrance of faults.
  3. Forgiveness may not reduce the hurt quickly; forgiveness is costly.
  4. Forgiveness is not excusing offenses; it involves confronting it
  5. Forgiveness, in the long run, involves paying attention to yourself. Symptoms of unforgiveness can be jealousy, self-righteousness, hate, bitterness, isolation, and retribution.
  6. Forgiveness is risky; it takes courage while depending on God's strength.

**PRAYER**

- Praise God for his holiness that restores us through his justice and mercy.
- Confess how you have held on to unforgiveness (be specific).
- Thank God for the redemptive work of Christ that cancels your guilt against God.
- Ask God for strength to forgive those who have offended us and courage to continually see and speak the good in others/offenders whom you have forgiven.