

## FORGIVENESS

Welcome to Sisterhood Lounge Room. In this episode Nicola is joined by Kiyah, Miriam, and Amy as they look at the subject of forgiveness.

As you watch this episode, we have highlighted the key scriptures, thoughts shared, as well as a few questions you can use in discussion with your groups, or in your own time...enjoy.

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Matthew 18:21-22

Forgiveness is a God idea. In our current culture, where it seems acceptable to harbour unforgiveness and bitterness against someone, the act of forgiveness ushers Kingdom culture into our everyday life's. This isn't unique to our generation, when Jesus walked the earth, a culture of shame and acting in retribution was the way of the times. So, when Jesus began to teach on forgiveness it was radically countercultural.

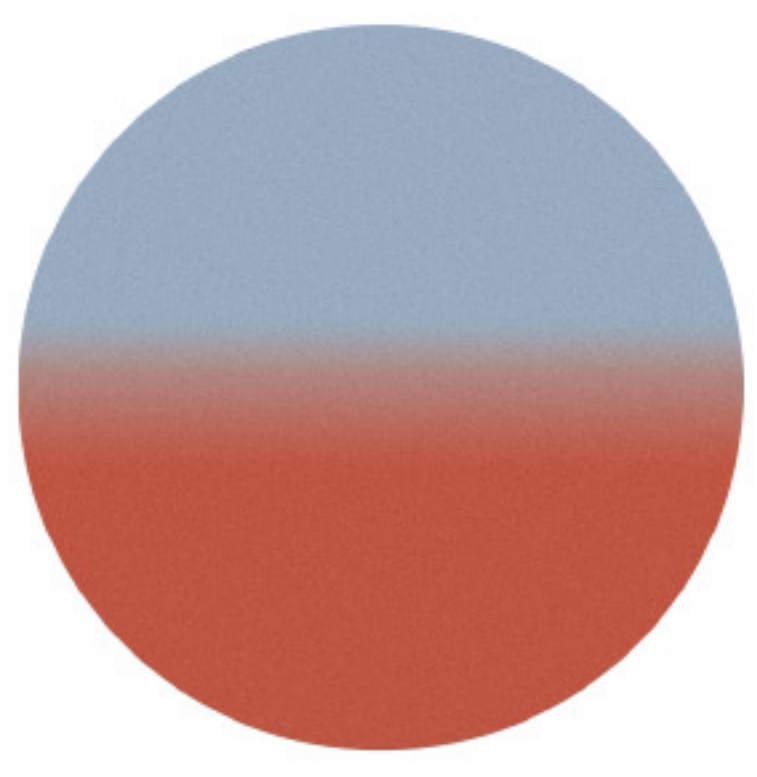
The forgiveness that Jesus offers and ask us to practice is lavish and bountiful. In Matthew 18, where Peter is asking how many times to forgive, Jesus isn't asking us to count how many times we forgive, but rather He teaches that if we are keeping count then we aren't really forgiving.

He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power of love.  
Martin Luther King Jr.

Forgiveness is a biblical command; it is God's intention for us. Jesus modelled a life of forgiveness, even on the cross He prayed to His Father to forgive his executioners. Forgiveness is not easy; it can be costly. Forgiving someone who has inflicted pain upon us is challenging, which is why this topic is important to discuss. As we get a full view of biblical forgiveness, we can gain an understanding that forgiveness is an invitation to freedom from what or who may have been oppressing you.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding. Ephesians 1:7-8





Q- How has the knowledge that you are forgiven by God affected your life?

Q – Have you felt like Peter at times, where you question how many times you will have to forgive the same person?

Q- What do you find most difficult about forgiving someone?

Nicola invited Kiyah to share on why it is important for us to understand God's forgiveness for us. Kiyah said that although we may know it is good to forgive, to do it in our own strength and understanding is difficult. However, when we approach forgiveness with a clear understanding that we ourselves have been forgiven, it shifts our focus off the offence and towards God and our gratitude to Him. We are all flawed human beings and make mistakes too; there will be many times we seek forgiveness from others and God. We are imperfect perfect people loved by a perfect God.

So, how do we can forgive others when it's hard to do so? Kiyah said our strength must come from God, we can't do it on our own. As God forgave us, He will also teach us how to live a life of forgiveness. God has provided us with a helper, the Holy Spirit. He will help us to forgive where it seems impossible to do so.

The parable in Matthew 18 tells of a King who forgives a servant of an astronomical debt, a debt that never could have been repaid. The King shows extreme mercy and grace, representing our King Jesus took on our debt that we could never repay. The story continues to document the servant's journey of unforgiveness towards another who owed him money. This amount was tiny compared to what he himself owed the King. He refused to forgive despite being the recipient of such lavish forgiveness. We must not do the same.

Q- What do you think it cost Jesus to bare the weight of all our sin and pay our debt? How does your heart respond to this revelation?

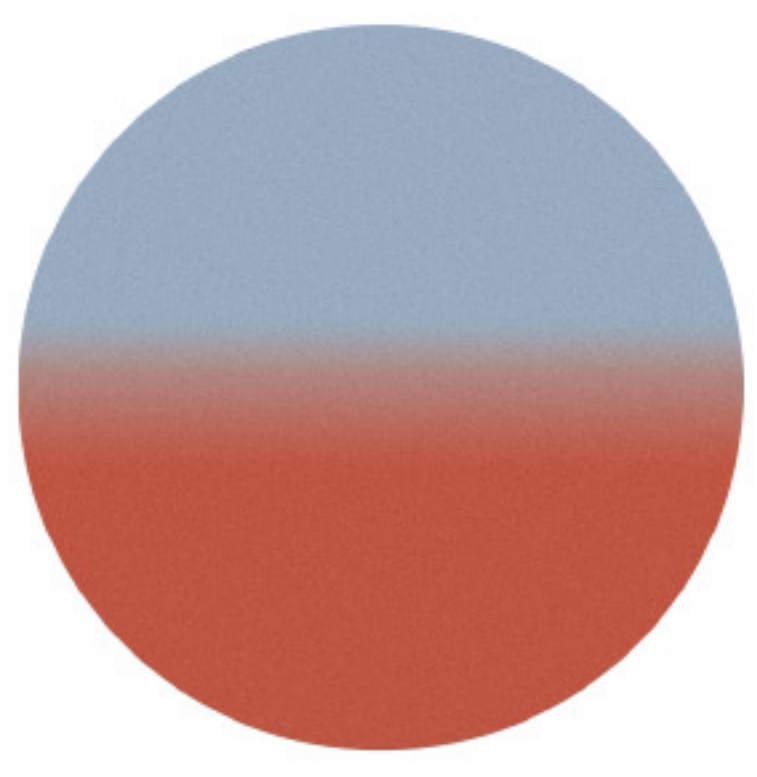
Q- What has been the hardest thing you have had to forgive? Do you still have work to do in this area?

Q- Have you ever sought forgiveness but not received it? How did that feel?

For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Romans 5:10





Amy started to unpack how we forgive those who show no sign of repentance. She said when you have been hurt by someone who doesn't recognise their own harmful actions or doesn't care, the unforgiveness that can live inside us towards that person can also be just as harmful.

Amy recommended a book called 'Forgiving when you can't forget' by Lysa TerKeurst and highlighted how the title itself is a statement. Often, we may not be able to forget someone's actions towards us, but we need to move forward and find a way to forgive for our own healing. Everyday life can trigger memories of past offence and pain. Forgiveness sometimes is a journey that takes time. It is not a single event but a process that may take years.

Amy read out a prayer that is found in the book 'forgiving when you can't forget' that has helped her personally it reads:

I forgive you (state their name)

for (state the circumstance and how it's affected you)

When my feelings do not yet allow for forgiveness, the blood of Jesus surely will cover it.

Amen.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Colossians 3:12-13

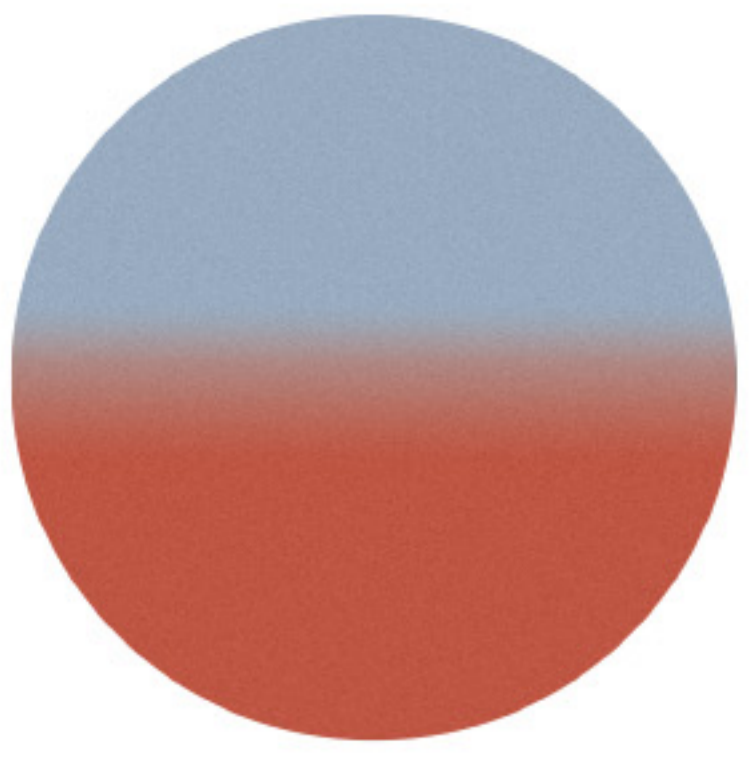
Q- Have you experienced a situation where someone has caused offence but has shown no signs of repentance? How have you processed this?

Q- Can you see how unforgiveness living inside might be affecting you?

**ACTION-** If you are currently in the process of forgiving someone, take a moment to use the pray format Amy shared to aid you in this journey.

Nicola invited Miriam to share her story. Miriam began by saying she is a survivor of gross domestic, physical, and emotional violence. Miriam shared how she feared for her life and the life of her children, until after years of abuse, escaped to safety. Miriam shared there was a long period where she was unable to forgive her ex-husband. Miriam felt that forgiveness was giving him an easy way out of his behaviour and letting go of her experience was too painful.





Miriam continued to share that the process of forgiveness took a long time. She said that the unforgiveness she held on to felt like a sickness inside her. She needed help from others who covered her in prayer to see her freedom. Miriam said without forgiving she could not heal and claim her life back. Without forgiving, she was still giving the situation power and control over her feelings. Miriam's revelation of God's love for her, enabled her to heal and let go.

Nicola added that the act of forgiveness is not condoning the behaviour. By forgiving someone we are freeing ourselves, but it is up to the person that caused the offence to repent before the Lord to seek forgiveness from Him or face judgement for their own sins. Our part is to extend forgiveness, just as it has been given to us and live repentant lives for the offences we cause.

When we are talking about forgetting sins, this is not about us have amnesia! There are some things we will never forget with our minds. However, the Biblical idea of forgetting is choosing not to act. When the Bible says God 'remembers our sins no more', it doesn't mean God can't remember them, but that He chooses not to act in retaliation of our sin because the debt is paid with Jesus blood. Likewise, when we speak about forgetting offense done towards us, this isn't an encouragement to blot it out of our memories, but to not take action towards others. Choosing not to hold offense against them. Choosing not to retaliate in anger or bitterness. There is a renewing of our minds we can seek from God where He can take the sting of pain away and what we carry in our mind doesn't have to be an open wound.

I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

Isaiah 43:25

Q- If you are currently carrying unforgiveness towards someone, who can you turn to for support and prayer like Miriam did?

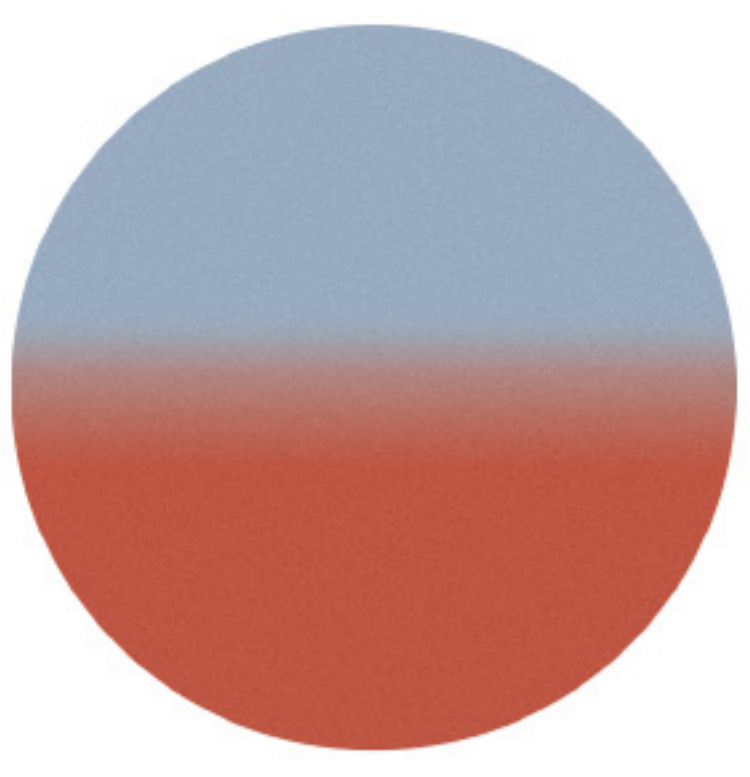
Q- Understanding that forgiveness is not condoning someone's actions, how can you take a step forward in your own forgiveness journey?

Q- If forgetting is choosing not to act in retaliation for someone's misdeeds. Do you hold any regret for how you have responded out of your offense?

Nicola invited Amy to share some thoughts on how we can start the journey of forgiveness.

Amy began by saying we first need to address unforgiveness in ourselves. We may think we have forgiven someone but when we search our heart are we still holding





them to account for offense caused?

Amy described it like holding a guilty verdict over someone's head and although they may be guilty, we are not the Judge. Instead, the only verdict we should hold over anyone is 'forgiven'. Amy continued to say this is something she practices often as it is easy for her own thoughts to spiral and to play conversations over and over again. When this happens, she simply stops herself and declares them forgiven and uses the prayer format she shared earlier 'where my feelings do not yet match, your blood surely covers'.

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Hebrews 12:14:15

Q- Are you currently holding a guilty verdict over someone?

Q- Can you see any signs of unforgiveness in your life? What are the ramifications of holding onto offense?

Q- Are there scenarios you replay in your mind, which still cause you anger or pain? Pray now that God will bring you peace and freedom.

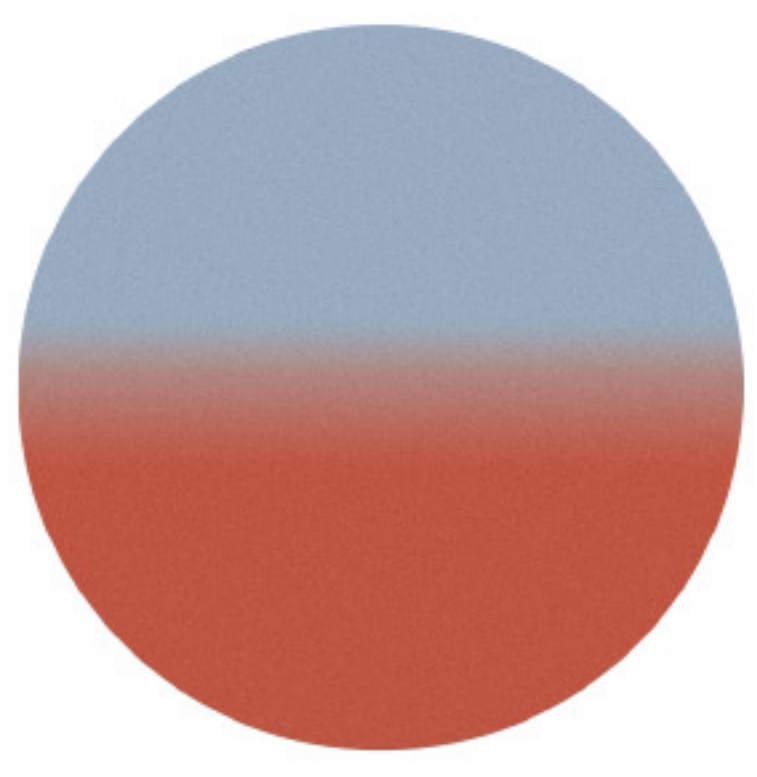
Nicola asked Miriam one final question "how have you seen forgiveness impact your life?" Miriam answered by saying when she forgave, she felt forgiven and free herself. That through forgiveness she gained the courage to take back her life and communicate her feelings without fear and anger. Miriam reminded us that Jesus came to give us life and life to the full. Through forgiveness she began to experience joy and peace again. Miriam ended by saying forgiveness gave her the opportunity to rediscover herself and to restart her life with full assurance of the purposes and plans God has for her.

Nicola highlighted Mark 6 which is the story of Herodias, King Herod's wife. The Bible says, "Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him." Nicola explained that the word grudge means to entangle, to be held or ensnared. In essence, unforgiveness can keep us anchored and tethered to our pain. She reminded us that Jesus came to give us freedom and that forgiveness breaks our entanglement of the thing that seeks to hold us bound. We can live free.

So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

John 8:36





Throughout this episode we have touched on the topic of domestic abuse. If you or someone you love has been affected by this, Refuge is a national charity with a 24/7 helpline for support and guidance. Their number is 0808 2000 247. Alternatively, you can visit their website to access live chat as well as additional information. <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/>