Study guide: Ephesians 4.22-5.2 Living & Giving forgiveness

The big idea: God forgives us honestly, fully and freely – he wants us to do the same....

1: "Cheap Imitations" of Forgiveness

Reg highlighted several ways we try to fake or shortcut true forgiveness (e.g., the "very British forgiveness," flat-out denial, feeling forgiveness, excusing forgiveness, or compensation forgiveness).

- Which of the "cheap imitations" of forgiveness mentioned in the talk do you find yourself most easily falling into in daily life?
- Why is it often so much easier to offer a polite brush-off or avoid conflict rather than extending true, honest forgiveness?

2: Understanding Grace, Mercy & Justice

The talk defines justice as getting what you deserve, mercy as not getting what you deserve, and grace as getting what you don't deserve, while still costing the giver.

- How does the "broken chair" illustration (where someone absorbs the cost rather than demanding payment) help clarify the difference between true grace and simply letting someone off the hook?
- The speaker notes that "grace still costs someone". How is this demonstrated in God's forgiveness through Jesus, and how does it change how we view our own debts to others?

3: The Trap of Legalism and "Being Right"

Remember the tree of the knowledge of good & evil / good & bad / right & wrong compared to the tree of life / grace / freedom.

- The talk suggests a deep conundrum: “The other person has wronged us, and we are in the right – but if we don't forgive, then we are choosing being right, over being free”. Why is the desire to "be right" so powerful, and how does holding onto it keep us stuck?

4: Practicing "One Another" Forgiveness

Forgiveness isn't just a concept; it is something lived out in community ("joining" rather than just "going to" church) where we inevitably rub shoulders and face friction.

- The talk describes true forgiveness not as "it doesn't matter," but rather as “paying the price to say that 'this will not affect our relationship from this time forward'”. How does viewing forgiveness this way impact the way we handle ongoing conflicts?
- The talk concludes by noting that unforgiveness acts like "drinking poison and expecting the other person to become ill," as it distracts us from God's grace and turns our eyes toward our pain. What is one practical step each of us can take this week to release a grievance and turn back toward the Father's love?