

The Faith-Filled Catholic Women's Bible Study Program

Leader's Guide for Group Discussion

Forgiveness

Song: "Forgive Them, Forgive Us"
CD 1, Track 5

Insert E-1 through E-4

Composer: Carla J. Giomo
Faith-Filled Catholic Women's Bible Music CD

Materials Needed

Faith-Filled Catholic Women's Bible and Music CD, CD player, Participant's Worksheet.

Setting the Stage

Before this session, mail (or e-mail) any member of the group that may not have been present at the last session the Participant's Worksheet for this session. Also, send a reminder of the date and time of the session as well as directions to the meeting place (if different from the church). To enhance the theme of **Forgiveness**, have the song "Forgive Them, Forgive Us" playing in the background when the participants arrive.

Warm Up - Optional (15 minutes)

Here is an exercise designed to test how forgiving we are. Read through the list of scenarios below (this list is also on the Participant's Worksheet for this session). Ask the participants to individually rank these situations in order from 1 (easiest to forgive) to 6 (most difficult to forgive). When all are completed have each member share her answers with the group. Discuss the differences.

1. You are anxiously awaiting your husband to come home this evening because today is your 12th Wedding Anniversary. Having completely forgotten what date it is, he walks in the same as usual and says nothing about today being significant in any way.
2. A colleague at work inadvertently gets full credit in a company memo for the success of your project. She sees the error as no big deal and does nothing to correct the misunderstanding.
3. One of your children is critically injured when an old man speeding, misjudges a curve and crashes into your car. The old man receives a suspended sentence for negligence, his license is revoked for life and he is fined \$15,000. Your child's recovery looks promising but could take as much as a year to be complete.
4. You advised your teenage daughter that you don't approve of her going to see a questionable rock group that is coming to town tonight. It sounded last week like you were winning the battle as she quit asking for your permission. Then, she finds out at school that she can get tickets to the concert after all. She tries to call you but your cell phone is off and you won't be home until 7:00. She takes \$30 out of the "family emergency cup" and heads out with friends to the concert thinking she'll explain it all to you later.
5. Another woman who you consider a friend is telling others about something that, even though true, is not very complimentary about your family. She thinks she is actually doing you a favor by getting the "true story" out so as not to let the rumor mill get out of hand. You think it would be better if things were simply left unsaid.
6. Others pressured you to have an abortion when you were 13 after making a horrible mistake with a young man you just "knew you were in love with." Choosing the abortion was ultimately your decision and you have been haunted by it ever since. Can you forgive yourself?

Opening Discussion (10 minutes)

Together, read aloud the **Plan and Purpose** article on insert page E-1. Then, ask each participant to write her answers to the questions below (using her Participant's Worksheet). Play the song "Forgive Them, Forgive Us" very quietly in the background to help create a peaceful mood.

Is there a wound in any relationship in my life (family member, colleague, friend) that is not healed because of a lack of forgiveness? What was/is my responsibility for the original wrong? What is stopping healing from taking place in this situation? Have I confessed any sin I may have committed?

Ask any member of the group who is comfortable doing so to share her story with the group. (After sharing, go immediately into the group prayer)

Group Prayer (5 minutes)

Leader: Dearest Jesus, we ask Your mercy and forgiveness as we contemplate these wounds in our lives. Give us the courage and loving hearts necessary to forgive those who have wronged us and to seek forgiveness of those we have wronged. We ask You to hear our prayer for our special intentions whether named today or kept in our hearts: **enter aloud all individual intentions.** Shower us with Your grace and blessings today and every day. This we ask, in Your name, Amen.

Spiritual Awakening - Opening Prayer

Have the participants read together the **Opening Prayer** at the top of insert page E-2.

Spiritual Awakening #1 - Recognizing (10 minutes)

Ask for volunteers to read aloud each of the Scripture passages in the **Recognizing** section of **Spiritual Awakening** on insert page E-2. Remind the participants that each reader will pause for a few seconds of silence after each passage to allow anyone to offer any spontaneous thought, prayer, praise or thanksgiving that this Scripture might inspire. After the final Scripture is read, ask the group, "What else do these Scriptures teach us about **Forgiveness**?" Share and discuss any responses.

Spiritual Awakening #2 - Reflecting (15 minutes)

Read as a group the story of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35 (Page 1039). Then, ask any volunteers to share with the group about a time when someone forgave them for wronging them in some way.

Faith in Action (15 minutes)

Read the **Faith in Action** article "The Old Rocker" on insert page E-4. Then, ask the participants to share with the group their answer to the following question: Are you hanging on to anything or do you need to remove anything that might be hindering a closer relationship with God and with the people around you?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Pray together an Act of Contrition asking God for forgiveness and for the resolve to amend our lives.

Fellowship (15 minutes)

After the session is completed and while refreshments are served, play softly in the background: "Forgive Them, Forgive Us" from the Faith-Filled Catholic Women's Bible Music CD.

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