

Discussion Guide #1
Possibilities: Forgiving Yourself & Others

*“With God all things are possible.” **Matthew 19.26***

“For if you forgive people their wrongdoing, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well.”
Matthew 6.14

- THANKS EVERYONE for making time to be part of what God is doing in our “Possibility” Lenten Series.
- Thank you, leader, for pulling this Possibility Posse/Pack/Partnership/Pow-wow together.

Let’s Get Started! Let’s go around and share our names and how you spend most of your time.

Opening prayer: *Thanks, God, for gathering us together for these fun and holy 30 minutes. Life can feel so limited and constraining at times. We trust in your promise that nothing is impossible with you. Send your Holy Spirit upon us in these moments, leading us to new life-giving perspectives, convictions, and . . . possibilities! In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Discuss:

1. In his sermon, Pastor Fritz had everyone get their keys out and then shared the quote: “forgiveness is unlocking prison bars and then realizing YOU are the one set free.” Have you found this to be true? Why or why not?
2. In worship, we sang a camp version of Ephesians 4.32. For a million bonus points, can one of you remember the tune and sing it? “Be ye kind one unto another. Tender-hearted. Forgiving one another. Even as God, for Christ’s sake has forgiven you. Do doo doodley doo. Ephesians four, thirty-two.” What does St. Paul teach us with this verse?
3. Country singer Garth Brooks offers this lyric: “When it comes to forgiveness, honey there ain’t no doubt—you buried the hatchet but left the handles sticking out.” Is this true in your life?
4. Our gospel featured the story of a woman caught in adultery. Some leaders pointed out that their law called for her to be stoned. (By the way, the guilty man isn’t brought forward. Doesn’t it take two to tango? ☺). Instead of stoning her, Jesus leads the group to admit that everyone is a sinner. They all disperse having saved her from death, and Jesus tells the lady to go and lean into the ways of life. To what extent can—or should—Jesus’ example be applied in our daily lives? How?

5. In our staff meeting this week, someone shared how angry and irritated they get over a very little thing (like their spouse not putting the grocery bags into the right container after unloading groceries), especially when they've discussed the situation with the spouse repeatedly. What's one thing you can stop or start doing to prevent a loved one from getting frustrated? What's one little thing you can "let go of" so the actions of others don't trigger frustration in you?
6. Why is it so hard to forgive ourselves some times? What "coaching" do you think Jesus might offer?
7. This week's possibility is entitled "Forgiving Yourself & Others." Was it a mistake not to also include "asking others for forgiveness"? To the extent you can, share a story about how you tried to repair a relationship you damaged. Oftentimes, we have regret for how we hurt someone decades ago. But does an opportunity still exist for you to seek forgiveness and/or address one of your wrongs? It is possible?
8. What's one thing you've learned about forgiveness over the years?
9. Out of these three quotes, which resonates with you most and why?
 - a. The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.
Mahatma Gandhi
 - b. Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done or putting a false label on an evil act. It means, rather, that the evil act no longer remains a barrier to the relationship. Forgiveness is the catalyst creating atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning. Martin Luther King Jr.
 - c. Forgiving isn't something you do for someone else. It's something you do for yourself. It's saying, "You're not important enough to have a stranglehold on me." It's saying, "You don't get to trap me in the past. I am worthy of a future."
Jodi Picoult
10. Bonus question: Why is it important that Christians talk about God-given possibilities?

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, thanks again for these holy moments with friends in Christ this session. Help me to forgive myself and others . . . because YOU have first forgiven me. Empower me to quickly ask others for forgiveness when I'm in the wrong. Thanks for being our God with whom all things are possible! Be with us this week. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Thanks everyone!
See you next week!
Next week's topic: Breaking Outside Your Bubble