



Grace Fellowship of Morehead, KY

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Tapping Into God's **RESTORATION**

This series was preached from January 16 to February 22, 2022

Introduction Week One:

Acts 3:19-21

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

“Refreshing” – recovery of breath...

We can say “times of restoration will come”!

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

(NLT) – “For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his holy prophets.”

Two things:

- 1.) Jesus is coming again! Don't ever forget that!
Live like He is coming today...plan like He is never coming back!
- 2.) Before He comes again, there will be a time of restoration for His body!
Everything that has been stolen will be returned and upgraded!

BELOVED: God is telling us...it is time for restoration!

BILL JOHNSON: We've been invited into the opportunity to work with the Lord to recover everything!

There are times that you stand still and God does the work (you just get out of the way)...**most of the time** God invites you to work with Him.

- * Noah had to grab the hammer!
- * David had to grab the stone!
- * Moses had to grab his rod and staff!

BELOVED: God is working with us to restore...so there are things that we are being called to do in order to restore all!

Introduction Week Two:

As I was meditating on this message this week, the story of Joseph came up in my spirit.

THINK ABOUT IT: He had a dream! I was a big dream! He was blessed...things were going good in his life.

THEN: Everything that could go wrong...did go wrong!

- ~ Some of it was self-induced...doesn't matter!
- ~ He faced certain death (in the pit)...his brothers talked about it.
- ~ He became a slave and worked for someone else...as a slave!
- ~ He was framed and thrown in prison.
- ~ People forgot about him and left him in his bad situation!

Goodness...that is crazy!

YET: God obviously blessed him and has HIS hand on him the whole time!

PAUSE: You may have gone through a lot of things in the past several years...perhaps for some of us it has seemed like if something could have gone wrong, it did go wrong! We have lost things!

HOWEVER: God has still been good to us! He has still blessed us! Praise God!

FINALLY: In one day...

Genesis 41:39-44

- 39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:
- 40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.
- 41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.
- 42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;
- 43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.
- 44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

NOTICE: He didn't just receive back what he had lost..he was promoted and received SO MUCH MORE than he could ever imagine! IN ONE DAY! ***Restored by God!***

Introduction to the Last Week:

Luke 15:11-23 (The Prodigal Son)

- 11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:
- 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.
- 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.
- 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.
- 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.
- 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

- 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!
- 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,
- 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

The point I want you to see in this account is that EVERY THING that the younger son had lost...WAS HIS FAULT!

He couldn't blame it on dad! He couldn't blame it on society! He WASTED IT!

NOTICE: His revelation moment in verse 17...when he came to himself...

- * He knew he had messed up.
- * He knew he wanted and needed dad's help.
- * He knew he didn't really deserve anything.
- * He was ready to take less.

BELOVED: God has spoken to us about restoration for the last two months. He is telling us we have entered into a time of restoration...a time of recovering ALL.

YET...many of us may be feeling that the mess we are in...we deserve, we did it to our self...

- * We messed up!
- * We know we need God's help and want God's help...
- * But we don't really deserve anything...'cause we made the mess!
- * So, we just want to get back to zero...anything will help.

BELOVED: When God says RESTORATION...He means for you too!

NOTICE what happens with the prodigal son.

- 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.
- 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.
- 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:
- 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

While he was YET A GREAT WAY OFF...His father WORKED WITH HIM towards restoration!

NOTICE: He restored ALL!

NOTICE a couple things:

- * His dad didn't necessarily go hunting him down.
- * His dad was ready to restore everything his son had lost.
- * But the son had to come ready to operate in dad's house! Work WITH dad...not to work his own plan!

BELOVED: If we are going to enjoy the restoration that God is promising us...we are going to have to work WITH HIM...operate in His plan...and HOW He tells us to work.

1.) Increased time in His presence.

Acts 3:19 – “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, **when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;**”

BELOVED: Nothing can replace your time with God! Just you and Him!
Intimacy! Face to face! Communion!

It is astonishing to me how many people struggle with time with God.

NOTE: I am not shaming anyone...we have all been there.

HOWEVER: Everything that Jesus went through was to restore friendship with us!

Romans 5:10 – “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

(NLT) – “**For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies,** we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son.”

John 15:15 – “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

God has secrets...FOR US!

Secrets on how to restore things that have been stolen! Secrets on what to do and where to go!

BELOVED: We have got to adjust our perspective on spending time with God...from spending time because we have to...to spending time with a friend who is TELLING US SECRETS!

THINK ABOUT THAT: We should face our time with God with anticipation and not as a chore. Spending time with a FRIEND is NOT a chore!

Don't be surprised that you are not tapping into His mind, when you are not spending time with Him on your own!

Exodus 33:8-11

8 And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle.

9 And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, **the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.**

10 And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door.

11 **And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.** And he turned again into the camp: **but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.**

NOTICE: A couple things...

- 1.) This was a common occurrence for Moses...because he was hanging out with a friend.
- 2.) We don't know how often Joshua went in there with him, but we know that once Joshua experienced it...he was hooked!

BELOVED: God will clue you into your restoration, when you learn to value His presence above all else!

LISTEN: Many of us can't even find the time to worship Him during a service, much less spend that intimate time alone with Him.

2.) Rejoice!

One of the things about the presence of the Lord is JOY!

Psalm 16:11 – “Thou **wilt shew me the path of life**: in **thy presence is fulness of joy**; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

Joel 2:25,26

25 **And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten**, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

26 And ye **shall eat in plenty**, and **be satisfied**, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

Of course, this is talking about the end times...it is talking about right NOW!

The end times will be marked with RESTORATION!

NOTICE: What restoration looks like...(vs. 26) you will have plenty and be satisfied and have NO SHAME! People will be jealous of you!

Many of us will say...well, when is it going to happen?

NOTICE: The first word in verse 25 is “AND”, which means something comes before restoration! **IN OTHER WORDS:** We don't start with restoration.

Well, what do we start with?

Joel 2:21,23,24

21 Fear not, O land; **be glad and rejoice**: for the LORD will do great things.

NOTICE: We are working with God...we rejoice and be glad...He does great things!

22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

NOTE: No matter how dim it is currently looking...there is harvest/restoration coming!

As a matter of fact it seems to say that it will be at a barren time that restoration will come.

23 **Be glad then**, ye children of Zion, and **rejoice in the LORD your God**: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

AGAIN: We are given the direction to BE GLAD...specifically calls out the church! Rejoice...not in your situation...but in God!

You are fooling yourself if you are walking around sad and dejected, complaining about your lot in life and expecting anything to change!

NOTE: Again, I am not trying to shame anyone...I am letting you in on an essential tool in tapping into God's restoration...JOY!

BEFORE you ever see the restoration of what has been stolen, you will need to learn walk in JOY!

JERRY SAVELLE wrote a book YEARS AGO with the title, *"If the Devil Can't Steal Your Joy, He Can't KEEP Your Goods."*

That is restoration and it is intimately connected to your JOY!

NOTICE in Joel RESTORATION hadn't even been mentioned yet...but the command to REJOICE and walk in JOY was mentioned!

Anyone can rejoice after restoration. Anyone can rejoice after a miracle!

BUT God didn't say, "I will restore, then you will rejoice!"

ILLUSTRATION: What would you think of someone who walked up to a fireplace and said, "As soon as this thing produces some heat, I will throw in some wood."?
Crazy!!

It doesn't work that way...you must put the wood in first, then it produces heat! Be glad and rejoice, then you will see the restoration!

BELOVED: Start rejoicing now! Restoration is coming!

3.) Enquire and Obey!

1 Samuel 30 – David and his men have come back to find the Amalekites have plundered their land. They ALL were empty and grieving!

NOTE: What have we learned? They were not going to get any answers that way!

So David does three things:

- a.) 1 Samuel 30:6 – "...but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God."
IN OTHER WORDS: He worked himself out of grief and moved into JOY!
UNDERSTAND: You are not moving into the next area of this until you move out of grief and frustration!
- b.) 1 Samuel 30:8a – "**And David enquired at the LORD**, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them?..."

UNDERSTAND: When you are stuck in grief...you will end up complaining and not enquiring...and never get your answer!

God has the answer...we just need to enquire and listen!

- c.) 1 Samuel 30:8b,9 – "...And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all. So David went...."

LISTEN: So many people are great and enquiring...searching for answers, but not many of them are great at obeying and doing what they are told!

BELOVED: If He tells you to pursue...pursue! If He tells you to wait...wait!

BELOVED: It requires a yes!

UNDERSTAND: Every GREAT accomplishment for the Kingdom of God starts with a YES!

1 Samuel 30:18-20 (they didn't JUST get back what they lost)

- 18 And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives.
- 19 And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all.
- 20 And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drave before those other cattle, and said, This is David's spoil.

NOTICE: David did NOT just recover all that he had lost...but he got the spoils from the Amalekites!

I want to throw one more INSIGHT in right here...regarding restoration.

YOU MAY FEEL that you are not in a position that is in the limelight...you may feel like you are not what others are...you may simply feel worn out!

THERE WERE 600 men who fought along-side David.

Vs. 10 – “But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.”

NOTICE: Only 400 of the men went after the Amalekites to do the fighting...200 of them were “faint” or basically exhausted.

HOWEVER: When it was time for restoration and dividing the bounty...

1 Samuel 30:21-24 (NASB)

- 21 When David came to the two hundred men who were too exhausted to follow David, who had also been left at the brook Besor, and they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him, then David approached the people and greeted them.
- 22 Then all the wicked and worthless men among those who went with David said, "Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away and depart."
- 23 Then David said, "You must not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us, who has kept us and delivered into our hand the band that came against us.
- 24 "And who will listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike."

UNDERSTAND: This...when it comes to enquiring and obeying...it comes down to a couple things:

- * Who are you connected to? You need to connect yourself to those who are enquiring and pursuing!
 - * Where are you suppose to be in that place?
- You may not feel that your area is that EXCITING or FUN...maybe it takes some effort that no one else is putting forth.

HOWEVER: If you are watching over the extra stuff...the small stuff or if you are on the front lines...**STAY IN YOUR LANE** and ***you will be a part of restoration!***

ILLUSTRATION: I was sitting in the living room, the other night, and my daughter came in from basketball practice...her dog was SOOO EXCITED! She played with him a little bit and then told him to lay down...and stay! She kept saying stay...and then walked out of the room...one more time reminding him to stay. HE STAYED...and looked excited (wagging his tail)! A few seconds later my daughter walked around the corner with a treat. He was rewarded for His obedience!

I said to her, "You had better never betray that trust!"

Then I thought... how amazing it is for people to think they are more trusting to their dog than God is to His kids.

Numbers 23:19 – "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

LISTEN... My daughter didn't tell her dog that she was getting him a treat...but her dog knew that when he did what he was told that a reward was coming his way.

BELOVED: When we ENQUIRE...and OBEY...no matter what we are doing or how hard it is or how menial it is...we should start wagging our tail...we should start getting excited... RESTORATION OF ALL is on its way!

ONE EXTRA INSIGHT: Before moving to the next area...a lot of people say they enquire of the Lord, but then do things that the Word clearly says NOT TO DO, but they enquired of the Lord and the Lord said to do this or that!

BELOVED: The Spirit of the Lord moves within the parameters of the Word...your men/women of God **MUST** move within the parameters of the Word. **Nothing can move outside of the Word of God! Nothing!**

Psalms 138:2 – He exalts His Word above His name!

4.) **Quit looking back! Expect restoration!**

Exodus 14:10-12 – They have JUST LEFT Egypt!

10 And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.

11 And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?

12 Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

Exodus 16:3 – The people were hungry!

3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

Exodus 17:3 – The people were thirsty!

3 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

This was their pattern of operating! Looking back! Therefore, they *walked in circles* and kept getting what they had always gotten!

Most of them NEVER saw restoration!

THINK ABOUT IT: It wasn't even JUST about the new battles...the new situations they came across...it was about what was behind them.

When we are confronted with new battles...the enemy LOVES to remind us of old hurts and things that have been stolen from us. **BELOVED:** His purpose is to stop us from moving forward!

~ Often it is about "nothing has changed".

~ Or that it isn't working! If it was working...I wouldn't have these new battles.

HONESTLY if you didn't have these new battles, it wouldn't be working. The new battles are coming to take away your progress in the Word.

Mark 4:16-19

16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, **when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake**, immediately they are offended.

18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

19 **And the cares of this world**, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

NOTICE: The battles steal the Word...but also the busyness of the world gets you to turn back!

BELOVED: Don't get fooled...the enemy LOVES to use busyness to get you to stop looking forward or to GO BACK into what stole your time in the past.

Finally: Numbers 14:2-4

2 And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

3 And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

4 And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

UNDERSTAND: They could never get LOOKING BACK out of their system...so they NEVER got what they were promised!

Luke 9:62 – "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Hebrews 10:38-39

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Philippians 3:13,14

- 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do,
forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things
 which are before,
 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

HERE IS THE KEY: Your expectation of what lays ahead of you must make **LOOKING back seem dumb!**

HUGE EXAMPLE:

Hebrews 12:1 – “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, **let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily be set us**, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”

BELOVED: There are some places you CANNOT move with the weight of your past on your mind or in your memory!

ILLUSTRATION: Jessica and I were watching an ole Western...dad would be proud. It was a group of families moving from Texas to Oregon to set up a new life. One family was smart and traveled light...enough to live off the land they were moving into, but a major group were FULLY LOADED with their old life. Heavily weighted down wagons! One musician had a full sized piano in his wagon.

Well, when they got to their first river...they found the easiest place to cross, and were told to unload anything that they absolutely did not need. So many of them had so many ties to their stuff and didn't want to get rid of them.

FINALLY the wagon master yelled...you have three choices: 1.) Unload and cross the river; 2.) Keep all your stuff and drown; 3.) Go back to Fort Worth.

BELOVED: That is kinda our decisions when it comes to our past.

- 1.) We can either keep holding on to the hurts and memories of wrong doings....or “what we had” in the old life and try to move on...but that will end up wearing you out!
- 2.) We can go back to the old life...but there is NEVER restoration there!
- 3.) You can lay it down and move on and see RESTORATION in the promised land ahead of you.

In Genesis 19...God was taking Lot and his family from the thing that was going to DESTROY them...to a place of safety and increase!

The only rule God gave to them...don't look back!

Genesis 19:26 – “But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”

BELOVED: Picture your restoration! See it in your heart! Practice it!
 Increase your expectancy!

Joshua and Caleb had seen the land and was ready to roll!

THINK ABOUT Paul during the ship wreck and on the island...he didn't have time to think about what was behind him...he just kept moving forward!

5.) Focus on Others!

We've talked a lot about Job! I believe that he is one of the most beautiful examples of the enemy steal and God restoring double!

UNDERSTAND: There was NO ONE like Job on the earth...he was wealthier and more influential than anyone else.

Well, one person surpassed him...the Job in chapter 42, after God restored Him.

BELOVED: If you could see yourself AFTER RESTORATION...there is nothing that would stop you or make you look back! You would get SO HAPPY, right now!!!! That it would be hard to contain you!

But Job didn't just finally wear down God and God finally said, "Okay, I will restore, it's been long enough."

Job did something that moved God towards restoration!

NOTE: He first of all accepted God's correction!

Job 42:10 – "And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, **when he prayed for his friends:** also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before."

NOT before he prayed for his friends...**NOT** that Job meant to pray for his friends or that he intended to pray for his friends...**NOT** that he understood how important praying for his friends were. **WHEN HE PRAYED** for his friends!

One of the hardest things to do when you are in the midst of hurt...being stolen from...having the enemy attack you...is to think of others!

HOWEVER: It is one thing that will propel you into restoration!

BELOVED: Get your eyes off of your own self...your own problems...and get them on others!

Focusing on your own battles and problems FOSTER SELFISHNESS!

When you focus on others, you are walking in love.

Galatians 5:6 – "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

Romans 12:10 – "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;"

Philippians 2:2-7

2 Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

3 **Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory;** but in lowliness of *mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

4 **Look not every man on his own things,** but **every man also on the things of others.**

5 **Let this mind be in you,** which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and **took upon him the form of a servant,** and was made in the likeness of men:

Think of Jesus in the midst of everything He was going through in the garden and on the cross...yet, He was focused on the people around Him.

- * Teaching the disciples
- * Taking care of His momma
- * Forgive those who are treating me wrong

Sow Restoration!

Galatians 6:1 – “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, **restore such an one in the spirit of meekness**; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

BELOVED: One thing we need to work on...if we are going to step into restoration is SOWING restoration!

Help others be restored!

There are a lot of people around us who have made a mess of their lives...who are frustrated with lives...

Often we face them with a, “Well, you made your bed...” attitude!

BELOVED: God didn't have that attitude with us! We must work to restore others! Sow seed!

Matthew 18:23 – The unforgiving servant!

WE know the story! He was forgiven a HUGE debt...one that he could never pay...ever!

HOWEVER: He went out and saw a fellow servant who owed him 20 bucks! He should have helped restore that fellow servant, but he didn't!

WHAT HAPPENED? *He lost his restoration!* He didn't get it, even though it was set aside for him.

THIS REALLY BRINGS OUT an important part of FOCUSING on and LOVING others... forgiveness!

Earlier in this series I taught about Joseph and the restoration that came his way...in one day! Not just what he had lost...but MORE!

HOWEVER: One of the key elements in his journey to restoration is the forgiveness that he gave to his brothers! They certainly didn't deserve it, but he did it anyway!

- * **Forgiveness is not letting the offender off the hook.** Forgiveness means we can and should still hold others accountable for their actions or lack of actions.
- * **Forgiveness is returning to God the right to take care of justice.** By refusing to transfer the right to exact punishment or revenge, we are telling God we don't trust him to take care of matters.
- * **Forgiveness is not letting the offense recur again and again.** Forgiveness means we don't have to tolerate, nor should we keep ourselves open to, lack of respect or any form of abuse.
- * **Forgiveness does not mean we have to revert to being the victim.** Forgiving is not saying, “What you did was okay, so go ahead and walk all over me.” Nor is it playing the martyr, enjoying the performance of forgiving people because it perpetuates our victim role.
- * **Forgiveness is not the same as reconciling.** Forgiveness means we can forgive someone even if we never can get along with him again.
- * **Forgiveness is a process, not an event.** It might take some time to work through our emotional problems before we can truly forgive. As soon as we can, we should decide to forgive, but it probably is not going to happen right after a tragic divorce. That's okay.
- * **We have to forgive every time.** If we find ourselves constantly forgiving, though, we might need to take a look at the dance we are doing with the other person that sets us up to be continually hurt, attacked, or abused.
- * **Forgetting does not mean denying reality or ignoring repeated offenses.** Some people are obnoxious, mean-spirited, apathetic, or unreliable. They never will change. We need to change the way we respond to them and quit expecting them to be different.

- * **Forgiveness is not based on others' actions but on our attitude.** People will continue to hurt us through life. We either can look outward at them or stay stuck and angry, or we can begin to keep our minds on our loving relationship with God, knowing and trusting in what is good.
- * **If they don't repent, we still have to forgive.** Even if they never ask, we need to forgive. We should memorize and repeat over and over: ***Forgiveness is about our attitude, not their action.***
- * **We don't always have to tell them we have forgiven them.** Self-righteously announcing our gracious forgiveness to someone who has not asked to be forgiven may be a manipulation to make them feel guilty. It also is a form of pride.
- * **Withholding forgiveness is a refusal to let go of perceived power.** We can feel powerful when the offender is in need of forgiveness and only we can give it. We may fear going back to being powerless if we forgive.
- * **Forgiveness means that maybe all you can offer today is,** "I want to forgive you, but right now I'm struggling emotionally. I promise I will work on it."
- * **Forgiveness does not mean forgetting.** It's normal for memories to be triggered in the future. When thoughts of past hurts occur, it's what we do with them that counts. When we find ourselves focusing on a past offense, we can learn to say, "Thank you, God, for this reminder of how important forgiveness is."
- * **Forgiveness starts with a mental decision.** The emotional part of forgiveness is finally being able to let go of the resentment. Emotional healing may or may not follow quickly after we forgive.

Conclusion

WOW! What a series...what a group of things to focus on to move towards restoration!

My question is exactly what Pastor Mike ministered about 2022...

Luke 14:16-24

God is INVITING you to work with Him towards restoration...what is your excuse for not working with God towards your restoration?

- * You don't have the time to spend with God...you are so busy! Too busy to prioritize God over your stuff?
- * What God is telling me to do...I can't do! I can't give...I can't attend church...I can't love...I can't forgive!
- * My past has too tight of grip on me! I've been hurt too deep!

Listen, there are a million excuses and here is what God says about excuses...

Luke 14:21 – "So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things [the excuses]. Then the master of the house ***being angry said to his servant***, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind."

No EXCUSE is a good excuse!

BELOVED: Someone is getting your restoration this year...is it going to be you?