

Forgive Like Christ

Tonight we are kicking off a new series called, "Like." Check this out.

***Commercial: If I could be like Mike...**

That was me. Oh, man, that was me as a 90s kid. I wanted to be like Mike. And so did everybody else. And I know I wasn't the only Cocoon Leader, right?

Have you ever looked around at someone else and thought, "I wish I could be like him. I wish I could be like her. I wish I could shoot like that. I wish I was as funny as that guy. I wish I could act like her. I wish I was as beautiful as she is. I wish I was as popular as him. I wish I had as much money as him. I wish my family was like that family. I wish I wasn't like this. I wish I was like that."

There's a difference in admiring someone and being jealous of someone.

It's ok to look at other people and admire them. In fact, that's healthy. It's good when you are surrounded by people that make you better. That's one of the beautiful things about the church. You have people that you can look to, and go "I want to walk like that. I want to have a faith like that guy has. That lady over there is as faithful as she can be even though her circumstances haven't always been great. I want to be like that when my circumstances aren't great.

This is an awkward sentence, but I'll put it this way, there are some people that it is good if you want to be like them.

I hope you look at Tracie Shannon and think, "I want to be like her." Guys, I hope you get to know Wayne Miller like I've gotten to know him enough to go, "I want to be like Wayne."

I hope you'll look at the Albert and Mayola Englands and the Doug and Sharon Perrys and the John and Angel Thomas's of the church and go, "Yep. I want to be like that."

Over the next few weeks, we're going to take a look at a few individuals in the Word of God with certain characteristics that every single one of us would look at and say, "Man, I want to be like that." And we're going to take a look at how to become more like that.

Tonight, we are kicking things off, and how can we top this one, we are kicking things off by looking at Christ. Is there anybody that we should want to be like more than Him?

Specifically though, I want us to talk about "Forgiving like Christ."

Now just for a minute, I want you to think about this question. Of all of the people that we could look to to help us learn forgiveness, why is Christ like the ultimate example?

Why? What do you guys think?

Think about this: they nailed Him to a cross, they are killing Him, and while this is all happening, Jesus looks up to the Father and says,

*[33 And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. 34 And Jesus said,] **"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."***

Show of hands. How many people inside of this room have been mistreated before? Don't raise your hand on this one, but some of you have been really, really hurt before by someone. Maybe a friend. Maybe a parent. Maybe someone in your family that inflicted so much pain, that it literally changed you. It made you so angry, that made

you so sleep-deprived, that it made you miserable, so bitter that don't know how to deal with it.

I want you to know that Jesus Christ feels your pain. I'm telling you He understands pain in a very real way. And He's got the scars to prove it.

Christ forgave. And even while He hung on a cross He forgave.

Tonight my message is simple. I'm not big on doing one verse lessons, but there's a lot to be learned from Christ's statement. How do we forgive like Christ?

1. We have to forgive even when we are hurt.

Forgive? Even when I'm hurt? Oh, I don't think you get it. You just don't understand how hard that is for me to do!

I'm just supposed to forgive them? I'm just supposed to let it go and move on like everything's ok? I don't I can do that. I mean, you should've heard the things that they said about me. The names they called me. The lies that they spread. And not a word of it was true.

Slide.

I'm just supposed to forgive them? I don't think I can do that. Besides you don't know what they did to me. You don't have any idea how much pain that they caused me. You don't understand how deeply they hurt me. And I didn't do anything to deserve it!

Slide.

I may not understand how hard it is for you to forgive that person. But Christ does. He forgave the people that hung Him up on a cross.

We should forgive anyways. Always.

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Christ teaches us forgiveness.

Forgiveness is something sort of like a Christian trademark. You won't get it anywhere else. You won't learn it from anybody else. Why? Because it goes against everything that comes natural to us. Forgiveness is a discipline we learn from Christ. You know what I mean? I mean you have to learn how to do it.

Number two how do we forgive like Christ?

2. We pray **to God for them.**

"Father, forgive them."

I don't think I've ever considered this before but I think it's worth considering. Look what Christ says here and also look what He doesn't say here.

He says "Father, forgive them."

Sometimes in my prayers, and in my struggles to forgive people, I ask God to help me forgive. I don't think there's anything wrong with praying that. In fact it's right to pray that if you're struggling with it. God wants you to pray about your struggles.

But notice Jesus' emphasis in His prayer. He doesn't say, Dear God, please help me to forgive them." Instead, He is literally asking God to forgive them.

That is this really awesome concept in God's Word called intercession. It happens when someone would go to God on someone else's behalf and plead. A reconciler. A fixer. A peacemaker.

If we want to forgive like Christ, maybe, just maybe we need to focus less on ourselves in the forgiveness process and focus more upon the importance of God's involvement in the process.

We've got to remember, it's not just about me getting right with God. We need to want them to be right with God.

"Father, forgive them," was not a "me" prayer. It was a prayer **to God for them.**

3. If we want to forgive like Christ, number three, just like Christ we must remember that forgiveness of sins is part of God's plan.

For Jesus to withhold forgiveness would go against God's plan. Do you realize that when you withhold forgiveness from someone, you are going against God's plan to save? Forgiveness of sins?!? That's like ground zero of God's plan to save you.

To not forgive is like the anti-Gospel. You can't proclaim a Gospel that is based upon the forgiveness of sins, and withhold forgiveness. Does that make sense?

In other words, not forgiving, is un-God-ly. It's nothing like God. Because God is a being of forgiveness. What about you?
***i have no idea where your heart is tonight. But maybe you needed this.

Prayer.

Cocoonversation

Matthew 6:14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Faithful Like Joseph

Romans 8:28. What does this mean? (Partner up and discuss.)

No matter who you are, where you go, or what you do, don't ever lose sight of the One beside you.

What if you believed that—I mean you really believed that God was with you, no matter what situation you were in? That's the story of Joseph.

Man, I wish we had time to more closely examine this man's life this evening.

In Genesis 37 we read about Joseph at a young age. Life is good. He had these dreams about being destined for greatness. He's got a coat of many colors, he's the favorite kid in the family. Life is good. Except that his brothers were really jealous of him. And so they devise a plan to get rid of the little pest. They throw him down into a pit and sell him into slavery.

End of story. Except that it wasn't. Now the story moves to Egypt.

Genesis 39 Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 5 From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. 6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.

Wow. Life is good! The Lord was with Joseph. He's at the top of the food chain. He's second in command at the house of Potiphar, this really wealthy Egyptian man, who's an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

Life is good! God is good!

But then his life takes another bad turn. Potiphar's wife. The only thing he can't have in the house. The original desperate housewife.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. 7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. 9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" 10 And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.

Why? Because Joseph lived by this statement: **no matter who you are, where you go, or what you do, don't ever lose sight of the One beside you.**

Verse 9 is powerful. Now in this context, it's in regards to sexual sin, the sin of adultery specifically. But someone wants you to help them cheat on a test, hey that's a sin against God. I'm not doing that. God is right here beside me.

They want you to go with them to smoke this and get high or drink this and get wasted: how could I do this great wickedness and sin against God? He's right here beside me.

No matter who you are, where you go, or what you do, don't ever lose sight of the One beside you.

Joseph never lost sight of what was right and wrong. Specifically he never lost sight of God. He didn't just say, "No. That wouldn't be right. He connected it to his relationship with God. I don't want to sin against God.

And so he lived happily ever after and nothing bad ever happened to him because of how much he loved the Lord. Romans 8:28.

No. Not exactly. The story takes another turn.

Potiphar's wife tells everybody that Joseph tried to put the moves on her. And as soon as she tells it to her husband watch what happens.

19 As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. **20** And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.

One minute he's the favorite—he's got the cat of many colors. The next minute he's in the pit. The next he's a slave. The next he's second in command. And now where is he? Prison. Now watch.

21 But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. **22** And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. **23** The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.

Look familiar? Looks nearly word for word like what we read about Joseph in the verses before doesn't it? Now Joseph has somehow become a prisoner helping run the prison. Fast forward the story.

There were two prisoners dreamed dreams, and both were troubled by their dreams because they couldn't find the meaning.

Short story: God gave Joseph the ability to interpret their dreams. (Btw, Joseph didn't take credit for it himself. Why? No matter who you are, where you go, or what you do, don't ever lose sight of Who's beside you. He knew where his abilities came from.)

One of the prisoners, Pharaoh's cupbearer, was granted freedom and was restored to his position in the kingdom. Joseph only asked that the man remember how he helped him. The guy forgot.

TWO YEARS GO BY.

Pharaoh has a bad dream. No one can interpret it. Suddenly the cupbearer remembers, "Hey, there was this guy in prison who helped me with my dream!" Better late than never I guess?

So Pharaoh summons him out of the prison and says, "Hey, I hear you can interpret dreams." Joseph says, "Not me, but God can." Pharaoh tells him the dream, Joseph gives the interpretation, and watch what happens.

Genesis 41

38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" [c] **39** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. **40** You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. [d] Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." **41** And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." **42** Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. **43** And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" [e] Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. **44** Moreover, Pharaoh said to

Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." **45** And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

From the pit, to Potiphar, to prison, to the palace. No matter who you are, where you go, or what you do, don't ever lose sight of the One beside you.

People may hate me. People may get jealous of me. People may try to put me down in a pit. People may lie about me. People may forget about me. I may lose everything. I may have everything. I may live in a palace. I may live in a prison.

But no matter who you are, where you go, or what you do, don't ever lose sight of the One beside you.

But the story isn't over. Remember those brothers that mistreated him? The ones that were insanely jealous of him and wanted to kill him? Now there is a great famine in the land, and the brothers must go to Egypt to get more food. Guess who's in charge of giving out the food?

Now, what would the temptation be for Joseph? Let's suppose that you and I were in that situation...what might we be tempted to do?

No matter who you are, where you go, or what you do, don't ever lose sight of the One beside you.

It wouldn't be right to repay evil for evil. Instead he has mercy upon them and he shows them love.

Why? In what universe does that make sense? The world would scream that this was karma. What goes around comes around, and you guys are getting what you deserve.

Why would Joseph show them mercy? Because of the One beside him, because Joseph walked beside the Lord each and every day faithfully.

My favorite verse about the life of Joseph is Genesis 50:20.

18 His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." **19** But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? **20** As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. **21** So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

No matter who you are, where you go, or what you do, don't ever lose sight of the One beside you.

I look around this room and I see some enormously talented people. People with all kinds of talent...

God had a great plan for Joseph. And he's got great plans for you. All you need to do, is be faithful.

There may have been times in your life where you've felt all alone. Like nobody cared. But I'll let you in on a little secret: you are not alone. You have a God in Heaven who cares for you.

No matter who you are, where you go, or what you do, don't ever lose sight of the One beside you.

Transformed Like Paul

RUSH. FHU. Loyd Auditorium. Thought about the guy who sat behind me. A guy named Adam...

4 years after school. There was a great transformation taking place, and I didn't even know it. Something different about him. He had given his life to God. Now he was different.

A big fat hungry caterpillar chows down on all kinds of food, and then begins working on something called a chrysalis. He puts himself in this little cocoon, and you think he's dead. Like he's built himself this tiny coffin to die.

But something remarkable happens: a tremendous transformation. What went into that cocoon and what came out are two completely different things.

Transformation.

A sinner hears the truth about God's power to save them, how He sent His Son to take away their sins.

They decide to leave their old life behind. They are buried in the waters of baptism and they're raised up out of the water. They go into that coffin, into that cocoon, and what comes up out of that grave, out of that coffin out of that cocoon, is something beautiful.

A new creation.

Tonight, I want us to look more closely at the life of Paul. It's a story that you may know, but if you don't that's ok, too. You're going to learn it tonight.

*But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest **2** and asked him for letters to the synagogues*

at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Saul's a bad dude. Wants to murder Christians. He's hunting these Christians down, ready to kill them in the name of God.

Maybe it's not a fair comparison, but I can't help but think of ISIS. In their messed up logic, they really believe they are doing the will of God. And that's what makes it so scary.

Wouldn't it be awesome if God wrote another Paul story and an ISIS soldier obeyed the gospel and started leading others to the Lord?

3 *Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. **4** And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" **5** And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.*

Traveling along to Damascus to hunt down Christians. A light from heaven shines to bright it makes him fall over and he hears a voice. I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. Probably was ready to die. Like worst name ever to hear. He probably would've rather heard that it was anybody else but Jesus!

6 *But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." **7** The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. **8** Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. **9** And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*

We'll pick up there in a minute, but I want to break this story down for you in a few ways, and as we talk about this story I want you to consider how it applies to your life.

The first part of the story is Saul learned that he needed his vision corrected.

To me this is the ironic part of the story: Saul was seeing things one way. God took his sight away. And for three days he couldn't see anything.

So by taking away Saul's sight, God was able to teach him how to see things differently. And after those three days were over, Saul could see again. And now he had a whole new perspective.

I used to feel this way about the Bible. I used to think this about prayer. I used to believe this about Jesus.

In just a few days...Ralph Gilmore debate.

The reason they are debating: commemorate the debate between Thomas B. Warren and Antony Flew. Flew was a one of the most prominent proponents of atheism at the time, written books, taught at universities. Towards the end of his life, Flew changed his mind and said that the evidence led him to the existence of a God.

I used to think there was no God, but now I see things differently.

"Amazing Grace how sweet the sound...was blind but now I see."

God was teaching Paul perspective. And it seems that God works in similar ways with us today. There are times when we need to have our vision corrected.

2. Saul learned patience and dependence.

We read this in verse 9. **9** And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Why was he doing this?

10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." **11** And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying. **12** and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight."

Imagine putting yourself in Paul's shoes. Didn't eat or drink...fasting? I think he was fasting. But I suppose he was so upset he couldn't eat. We don't know. But imagine the things that must've been running through his head. How long am I going to be blind?

Have you ever noticed how much more clearly you are able to see things after you're a couple of days removed from what happened?

I can't believe they're so mad at me. Give it a day and you'll understand.

I don't even know where to begin to handle this situation.

In Honduras we say, "Let me consult with my peelow."

Maybe you are dealing with a tough situation or you get some bad news. Isn't it amazing how much clearer things can look a few days removed from it? I would suggest to you that during the course of those three things, Paul did a lot of thinking. And while his vision was gone he had to learn how to depend on God while patiently waiting for His guidance.

3. Saul learned of his need to obey the gospel.

13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. **14** And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name."

“Ok! Timeout! I know you said he’s had this vision of me teaching him the gospel. But I just had a vision of my own: it’s called he’s going to kill me. I’ve heard of this guy Saul. His poster is on our bulletin board at the church building: if you see this man, call crimestoppers.”

15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; 19 and taking food, he was strengthened.

Hooray! He gets baptized! End of story! He’s a new creation! He’s transformed! Not yet.

4. Saul learned that he needed to work for the Lord.

Now his life would be transformed. His decision to follow Christ would transform his behavior. One of my favorite parts of this entire story is in vss. 20-22.

For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. 20 And immediately (talk about transformation!!!) he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” 21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? (who is this guy? I don’t even recognize him. He’s transformed!) And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?” 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

He immediately started working for God and living for Him!

What about you? How can you be transformed like Paul?

1. **We need to have our vision corrected.**
2. **We need to learn how to depend on God.**
3. **We need to obey the Gospel.**
4. **We need to live for and to work for the Lord.**

You ever wonder if Paul thought, “Why me?”

Maybe Paul wondered that for the rest of his life. Paul called himself the chief of sinners. In other words, like the king of sinners. I’m the worst. The title holder.

His story would go on to illustrate how God’s rich grace, mercy, and his goodness. His is a story of transformation. How God would stop at nothing to save sinners—even giving up His only Son.

God had a special plan in mind for Saul. He would use Saul’s story of transformation in big, amazing ways to show how much God can change people’s lives. Saul is going to be an instrument for God, a special tool in God’s tool belt.

Guys, God has special plans for you, too. Here’s the kicker: I don’t know what all of them are. It may be for you to share His Word with the rest of Major League Baseball. It might be for you to influence your school. It may be for you to write a book that leads people closer to Him. Maybe you’ll go through something really hard and you’ll learn how to help other people go through that experience faithfully. But here’s what I do know: I just know that God will use you if you will allow Him to use you.

Let’s pray.

Encourage Like Barnabas

Introduction:

-Video

-Today will never come again. Be a blessing. Be a friend. Encourage someone. Take time to care. Let your words heal, and not wound.

1. Acts 4:37&38 [?] Encouragers do something.

-Man, I feel so bad for them. I wish I knew of something that I could do...

-Barnabas did not just talk, he acted.

2. Acts 9:26-28 [?] Encouragers change lives.

-What do you think of when I say the name Saul? He was a BAD man.

-Acts 9:26 [?] Can you imagine what it would be like for Paul to come to your congregation?

-Acts 9:27-28 [?] What happens if Barnabas chooses the easy thing and does nothing?

-One man. A murderer. A sinner. A liar. A blasphemer. A cheater. A self-centered person.

-One man. Changed everything. An encourager.

3. Acts 15:36-41 [?] Encouragers don't give up on people.

-Acts 12:12, 25 [?] Acts 13:13

Conclusion:

-Ephesians 4:29 [?] Will you choose to give grace through your words?

-Story of blind man.

-Barnabasses, who is your Paul?

-When you look in your class/this room...loneliness, depression, sin, not fitting in, fears, death, etc.

-What if someone has been praying for SOMEONE to come along, just someone. That someone could be you.