



December 6, 2009

Message: Story of Love

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MESSAGE NOTES

HOPE FLOW...LETTING GOD'S LOVE FLOW THROUGH US EVERY DAY!

- ◆ **Start each day with a prayer that God will give you understanding and wisdom and show you how it can be useful in your life.**

Day 1

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. —Romans 1:29-31

Look through this list, and think about which ones of these sins you've committed.

Romans 3:10-12 describes sin as a condition of the heart. So if your sin happens because of what's going on inside of you, whose responsibility is your sin?

What are you doing about it?

Action Step—write out the biggest struggles you deal with—the things that separate you from God. Then take some time and think about how you can, with God's help, avoid and overcome these pitfalls

Day 2

You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.—James 4:4

We all have struggles and sins. Even the Apostle Paul, who, aside from Christ Himself, arguably did the most to spread Christianity, struggled with sin. He referred to it as a "thorn in his side" (2nd Corinthians 12). But just because everyone struggles with sin, that isn't an excuse. Take a moment and be honest with yourself. What is your biggest struggle? What gets in the way of your friendship with God the most?

Action Step—Make an extra effort to connect with God throughout the day today

Day 3

For your Creator will be your husband; the LORD of Heaven's Armies is His name! He is your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of all the earth. For the LORD has called you back from your grief—as though you were a young wife abandoned by her husband," says your God.

"For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will take you back. In a burst of anger I turned my face away for a little while. But with everlasting love I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer. —Isaiah 54:5-8

Day 3 (continued)

Define forgiveness

When have others forgiven you?

When have you forgiven others?

Take a moment and on a separate piece of paper list out as many sins as you can remember that you've committed in your life.

Take the paper and burn it. This is what God has done with all the sins you've committed. Think and reflect on what it *really* means to be completely forgiven by God.

Day 4

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God—Romans 3:23

What are some of the biggest wrongs people have committed against you?

How much more have we hurt God?

When we don't forgive those who have wronged us, bitterness wells up within us. That grudge we're holding isn't really hurting the other person; it's hurting and affecting us. It's messing with us and making life harder. It's making us more bitter, cynical and angry. That's not good. Who are the people who have hurt you deeply that you still resent? Forgiving them not only benefits them, but it helps heal YOU. Forgive those who have hurt you.

Day 5

"Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. "But the man fell down before his master and begged him, 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.' Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. "But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. "His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it,' he pleaded. But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full. "When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."—Matthew 18:23-35

We've all been the man who was forgiven millions, and then turned around and not forgiven a much smaller debt. Once we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, we're forgiven for everything we've done and everything we'll do. So if we refuse to forgive someone, that's a giant hypocrisy.

Forgiveness is a decision (choice) I make to obey God and to walk as a lifestyle in a higher realm, by not allowing someone else's actions or attitudes to rule over my life, making sure I am willing for God to use me as an unrestricted channel of His love.

Who do you need to forgive?

Action Step—Pray for God to help you to forgive, releasing them into His hands.