



forgive**now**
W O R K S H O P

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview	1
Discussion Questions and Exercises	7
“Non-forgiveness . . .”	8
“Non-forgiveness . . .”	10
“Surviving Offenses . . .”	14
“Facing the Truth”	16
“Getting Over It”	19
“Coping with Sadness, . . .”	24
“Becoming a Forgiving Person”	28
“Reorienting Your Thinking . . .”	32
Order Form	35
Weekend Seminar	37
Selected Bibliography	39

PARTICIPANT
INFORMATION

OVERVIEW

Description

Existing studies clearly establish connections between forgiveness and physical and mental well-being. The Forgive Now Workshop adds a spiritual component to the more familiar training subjects of existing approaches. Our research has shown that this addition measurably improves the wholeness of forgiveness and enhances the degree of life satisfaction.

The Forgive Now Workshop is a series of DVD presentations for use by individuals or groups that explores the physical, mental, relational and spiritual aspects of forgiveness. It describes the advantages of forgiveness and the consequences of non-forgiveness, then points the way toward letting go of even the most grievous offenses and experiencing peace and hope. It comes with discussion suggestions and exercises.

Session 1: Non-forgiveness and Physical, Mental and Spiritual Health

Session 2: Non-forgiveness and Physical, Mental and Spiritual Health

Session 3: Surviving Offenses You Don't Deserve

Session 4: Facing the Truth

Session 5: Getting Over It

Session 6: Coping with Sadness, Anger, Resentment and Loss

Session 7: Becoming a Forgiving Person

Session 8: Reorienting Your Thinking and Relationships

OVERVIEW

Objectives

Forgive Now Workshop participants will:

- Learn the impact of forgiveness and non-forgiveness on health
- Learn what forgiveness is and what it is not
- Identify psychological, relational, emotional and spiritual barriers to forgiveness
- Explore natural methods of forgiving
- Combine natural principals of forgiving with spiritual teachings and methods
- Practice exercises that enhance forgiveness
- Discuss resource ideas and material to sponsor and facilitate workshops in your own community or church

DVD Presenters

Darold Bigger, PhD—has graduate degrees in theology, social work and counseling. He is a Certified Clinical Social Worker and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Before becoming a Professor of Religion and Social Work, and Assistant to the President at Walla Walla University, Dr. Bigger was a church pastor for over two decades.

Barbara Hernandez, PhD—has degrees in marriage and family therapy, nursing, and family social science. She is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, has directed therapy clinics, supervised therapists in training, and was an ICU nurse for 20 years. She taught in counseling, psychology, social work and marriage and family graduate programs before becoming Director of Physician Vitality and Professor, School of Medicine at Loma Linda University.

OVERVIEW

Detailed Curriculum

Session 1 Barbara Hernandez: *Non-forgiveness and Physical, Mental and Spiritual Health*

Physical effects of non-forgiveness

Exercises

Cycle of non-forgiveness

Q&A, Discussion

Session 2 Darold Bigger: *Non-forgiveness and Physical, Mental and Spiritual Health*

Religious assumptions about forgiveness

Combine God's help and our efforts

Recurring need to forgive

Exercise

Session 3 Barbara Hernandez: *Surviving Offenses You Don't Deserve*

Expectations and control

Making peace with "no"

Exercises

Session 4 Darold Bigger: *Facing the Truth*

Definitions

Theodicy

Exercises

Session 5 Barbara Hernandez: *Getting Over It*

Cycle of non-forgiveness

Forgiveness continuum

Taking responsibility

Exercises

OVERVIEW

Session 6 Darold Bigger: *Coping with Sadness, Anger, Resentment and Loss*

Blocks to forgiveness: reality, regrets, rage, revenge
Change of perspective toward offense and offender
Exercises

Session 7 Darold Bigger: *Becoming a Forgiving Person*

Steps to forgiveness
God's work in forgiveness
Forgiveness as God's gift
Sharing forgiveness
Exercises

Session 8 Barbara Hernandez: *Reorienting Your Thinking and Relationships*

Impact on family and relationships
Rewriting your grievance story
Exercise

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
AND EXERCISES

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The following suggestions are just that, suggestions. They are intended to get you started thinking about the implications and application of the presentations. You will no doubt be able to add many useful questions and exercises to those listed here. Be creative and personalize the principles of forgiveness in any way you can to make the freedom of forgiveness an energizing reality in your life.

SESSION 1

“Non-forgiveness and Physical, Mental and Spiritual Health”

BARBARA HERNANDEZ

Exercise #1

Close your eyes and get comfortable in your chair. Think for a few moments about something that has been done to you that either greatly hurt or grieved you, or caused you to feel angry or distrustful. Take about one minute to sit in silence and reflect on this experience.

After one minute: open your eyes, and share what you thought about, the emotions you felt, and the way your body felt as you were thinking about the difficult issue. Did you have any fight or flight responses?

Exercise #2

Make a list of the physical responses that you get when stressed. Share these with the group. Is there anything that has been helpful in alleviating these reactions (in other words, what helps calm you)?

SESSION 1

Exercise #3

What do other people hear, see, or experience from you when you are stressed or upset? How might your non-forgiveness “leak out” and affect other people?

Exercise #4

There are many misunderstandings about what forgiveness is and is not. Did you hear anything in this first presentation that surprised you regarding what forgiveness is not?

SESSION 2

“Non-forgiveness and Physical, Mental and Spiritual Health”

DAROLD BIGGER

Discussion starters/Reflection questions

- What assumptions have you had about forgiveness?

- Where did you hear or learn those assumptions?

- Which assumptions do you now find helpful and which are not helpful?

- What examples of forgiveness inspire and motivate you?

SESSION 2

- Are there others who help you to be willing to forgive?
What is it that they do or say that is helpful?

- What do you do that helps you forgive?

- What ideas, texts and/or stories from the Bible do you find helpful in forgiving others?

Exercise: Controlled Breathing

The object of this exercise is to become aware of your physical self, your emotional and mental state. Our body gives us early clues to our emotions and thought processes. Learning to control our body helps us regain control of our emotions and thoughts. Controlled breathing gets us started reclaiming control over ourselves.

First, sit or lie down in a comfortable place. If you become aware of discomfort, move to relieve it. You might begin by closing your eyes to limit visual distractions, and then become aware of

SESSION 2

your breathing. Notice whether it is fast or slow, shallow or deep. Inhale and exhale in whatever way is comfortable for you, through your nose or mouth, being aware of how your body decides when to inhale and when to exhale.

Experiment taking a deep breath and holding it for a few seconds before you exhale. Sense the air coming into your throat and lungs, filling your chest and diaphragm. Become aware of how the rest of your body is responding to this simple exercise of paying attention to your breathing. What is happening to the muscles of your legs, arms and torso?

What do you sense in your internal organs; do you notice any difference in your stomach or your heart rate?

SESSION 2

Are there changes in how your head feels?

Practice this exercise at least two or three times each day for at least two to three minutes each time. At first it will not matter whether you do it when you're particularly stressed since you just want to get acquainted with the exercise. As you become more familiar with it and more aware of yourself, try connecting the exercise with a stressful event—a frustration or irritation or a difficult memory. Instead of letting the event hijack your physical, mental and emotional reactions, use this exercise as a way of regaining awareness and control of your self. Let it relax you and bring you back to a more rational and peaceful state.

If you're part of a class or group, jot down some notes about your reactions to this approach so you can share them with classmates and ask questions about it as you learn from one another.

SESSION 3

“Surviving Offenses You Don’t Deserve”

BARBARA HERNANDEZ

Exercise #1

What is characteristic of you when it comes to avoiding forgiveness? In other words, do you deflect, try to control, exact payback from others, etc.?

Think about this in terms of a forgiveness issue that you have, and discuss with others in the group what you find yourself doing to avoid forgiveness.

Question:

Can you identify any expectations that you have had about life or relationships that have led to anger?

SESSION 3

How can you change your expectations so they lead to hope instead of anger?

Exercise #2

We all have grievance stories. Can you share with the group how your particular grievance story has placed you at the “Miserable” end of the Forgiveness Continuum?

SESSION 4

“Facing the Truth”

DAROLD BIGGER

Discussion Starters/Reflection Questions

- How do you respond to the list of what forgiveness is not? Does it make sense or seem too idealistic?

- How can you really forgive if you still remember the offense?

- In what ways do some of the “Forgiveness is Not” items soften the reality that some of the consequences of being hurt never go completely away?

- How can offenders be held accountable if we release our anger and resentment toward them?

SESSION 4

- Issues that call for our forgiveness often raise questions about God. What are some of those questions? What are some responses to those questions and which do you prefer or dislike?

Exercise: Breathing, Body Awareness and Body Scan

The controlled breathing exercise you've been practicing is an excellent foundation from which to develop a series of even more focused approaches. Remember that the purpose of paying attention to our breathing is that it raises our awareness of ourselves and how we're reacting to things around us.

Exercise: Body Awareness

As you become more familiar with controlled breathing, pay more and more attention to the rest of your body. Notice what happens to your breathing, muscles, heart rate, organs, and inside your head when you feel happy or sad, upset or relaxed, angry or pleased. A body scan will help.

Exercise: Body Scan

Get into a relaxed position and spend a bit of time letting go of distractions. Closing your eyes and becoming aware of your breathing may help. Then begin at one end of your body and move slowly up or down, pausing until you are consciously aware of

SESSION 4

the feelings in each body part. For example, if you began at your feet you would be aware of sensations in the soles of your feet, your ankles, calves, knees, thighs, hips, stomach, chest, neck, jaw, mouth, nose, eyes and inside your head.

As you become more and more aware of your body you will become able to sense changes as your environment changes or even as you imagine yourself in different settings and circumstances. Begin with imagining a place or a memory that is pleasant and in which you felt safe and appreciated. Take several minutes remembering or imagining the scene. Include all the senses possible: imagine seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. All the while remain aware of what changes occur in your body, what muscles or organs adjust, whether your breathing or heart rate changes, where you feel tense and where you feel relaxed.

Exercise: Emotional Awareness

In time you will come to associate certain physical responses with particular emotions. The connections vary some from one individual to another, but all of us have them. Those physical responses are our first clue that we are feeling an emotion. Our brain recognizes our physical response and, if we're alert, translates it into an emotional category. So the sooner we are aware of an emotional reaction the sooner we can do something about our response. Body awareness is a most effective path to regaining self-control.

SESSION 5

“Getting Over It”

BARBARA HERNANDEZ

Exercise #1

In this segment, we discuss a number of items on a list entitled, “What is Grief Work?” Do you think you have done your grief work, or processed your forgiveness issues yet? If so, can you identify how you have been able to address each item on the list of grief work components? Are there any that still need to be explored?

Do you have a plan to address the issues that have not yet been processed?

SESSION 5

Share with the group how you plan to do this and make a commitment to begin working on these items before your next meeting.

Exercise #2

Think about someone who has grieved or offended you. Make four columns and identify your thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and actions that surround the offense that you are struggling to forgive.

Thoughts	Feelings	Beliefs	Actions

Now examine each of these columns carefully. Do the things that you have placed under each heading make you more forgiving or more prone to forgive?

SESSION 5

Are there any of these feelings that give you clues that you need to take a particular action to move ahead or unburden yourself?

Are there any behaviors that need to change in order to live consistently with your beliefs or theology?

Are you able to think about your grievance story without becoming physiologically aroused and upset?

SESSION 5

If you should begin feeling sadness or outrage as you do this exercise, take a few slow, deep breaths and remind yourself that the offense is in the past. Once you have calmed yourself, you may continue.

Exercise #3

After you consider what has happened to you that has been difficult to forgive, what are the positive things that you still have in your life that give you meaning and that you can celebrate?

Write these down and be sure that none of these items minimize the seriousness of the offense.

After the list of positive life features is constructed, see if you can tell your story in the yes/and manner to someone in your group: “Yes, [the offense] did happen, AND I managed/accomplished/survived” etc. Tell the story in a way that acknowledges what happened and also celebrates something that you obtained or learned.

SESSION 5

A thought to consider: Are you putting your energy into something productive for you, rather than putting your energy into something that you can't change?

What is it that you really want in this situation?

Are you putting your energy toward fulfilling a goal that will make you a happier and more content person?

SESSION 6

“Coping with Sadness, Anger, Resentment and Loss”

DAROLD BIGGER

Discussion Starters/Reflection Questions

- What is/are your blocks to forgiveness?

- What have you tried to overcome those blocks? What has helped and what has not helped?

- How can we accept painful realities without becoming pessimistic and depressed?

- What brings joy and hope to you in spite of our harsh world? How might you focus more on those positive things?

SESSION 6

- Have you experienced positive changes in your attitude in spite of bad situations that did not change? What made that change possible for you—how did you do that? Have you seen others who have regained an optimistic view toward life in spite of severe hardships? What can you learn from them?

- What can you learn from the biblical story of Joseph about how to cope with reversals, false accusations and betrayal? (Genesis 37-45, especially 45:1-8)

Exercise: Visualization

Now we wish to use the coping skills you've developed—controlled breathing, body scan and emotional awareness—in a very practical and personal way. You'll learn to shift your response to the offenses against you from negative and destructive reactions to positive ones. You'll learn what you can do to let go of hurts and regain peace.

Begin in the same way as with earlier exercises, by getting comfortable, letting go of distractions and becoming aware of your breathing and body sensations. Then bring to mind a small incident, something that was upsetting but not life changing. Beginning with something small will make it easier to practice the technique before tackling a larger situation. You might remember

SESSION 6

a car slowing you down in traffic or someone cutting in front of you in the grocery line, for example.

As you recover the memory of that incident, remain aware of your body. What sensations do you have and what is the emotional message of those sensations?

Then choose to focus on your breathing. Let go of the tension you feel in your body. Let the intensity of that memory fade enough to let your body relax. Remember that this is just a memory, not a present situation. Distance yourself from it enough to regain your mental and emotional balance. You might act out releasing the tension by opening your hands or unfolding your arms—focus on the tension wherever it is in your body and choose to let it go. Get in touch with your breathing and let it become relaxed and regular.

This pattern of bringing up the memory and letting go of the body responses it triggers can be repeated several times during a single exercise, reinforcing the fact that you are managing the stress, you are controlling yourself, you are choosing how to react to this memory.

As you become more and more proficient with this approach you can raise more sensitive incidents, those that stay with you for longer periods of time and carry more emotional baggage with them. But do so in a measured way, increasing the more volatile memories only as you are successful at letting go of lesser hurts and resentments.

SESSION 6

Exercise: Forgiveness Ceremony

Here’s another exercise developed and used productively by Gary Parks and his congregation in Salem, Oregon. It can be used as part of the visualization described above or done separately. Make or find a list of all the emotions you can think of. Write them down so you can see them, not just think about them.

Identify and circle the emotions the specific incident or person you wish to forgive has triggered in you. When and only when you’re ready, plan a time to let go of these painful hurts. Gary’s church members have a ceremony in the company of others whom the wounded person chooses. They gather, the wounded person identifies the grievance, goes through the list of painful hurts and feelings, and chooses to release those feelings and not retain anger and resentment toward the person who caused them. Others in the group pray with and for the offended one and become witnesses and supporters of this courageous choice.

SESSION 7

“Becoming a Forgiving Person”

DAROLD BIGGER

Discussion starters/Reflection questions

- How can victims accept their own responsibility for hurting others without being re-victimized? Is it realistic for them to accept their own faults and guilt and still hold offenders accountable for what they have done? “Can the pot call the kettle black?”

- In what ways might being both a victim and a perpetrator confuse our journey toward forgiveness?

- Isn't all guilt bad—destructive of self-esteem? How can one monitor personal guilt so as to acknowledge misdeeds and yet feel valued?

SESSION 7

- Is the cycle of perpetrator-offense-grievance-revenge-perpetrator, etc. never-ending? Where and how can it be interrupted?

- What lessons about guilt and forgiveness might we learn from the story of the woman at the well (John 4:1-44)?

Exercise: Visualization

Begin as before, getting into a comfortable position and letting go of distractions. Become aware of your breathing and gradually do a body scan to find areas of tension or discomfort. One at a time focus attention on each tense area, “listen” to what it is saying to you, then let the tension go.

Remaining aware of your physical self, imagine being in a place where you feel safe and comfortable. Picture the scene and include as many of your five senses as you can.

When you are safe and relaxed, let yourself remember your own failures, times when you have said or done things to discourage or hurt or wound another. Empathize with them, let yourself experience the sorrow of bringing pain and sadness on them. Experience yourself as a failure, a perpetrator of injustice, the cause of grief and misery. Be aware of the physical sensations that

SESSION 7

accompany these memories and name the feelings toward which those sensations point.

While remaining aware of your physical feelings, imagine someone approaching whom you like a lot, someone you trust and who does not threaten you. Imagine them coming to you while you feel so sad and broken, discouraged about yourself. In spite of what you have said or done, they still accept you. Do they have something to say to you? What do they do to comfort you?

Imagine them making you feel accepted in spite of what you have said or done, in spite of who you are. Be aware of the physical sensations this profound acceptance triggers and what feeling labels come with them. Bask in that place of affirmation, a place of beginning again. Let yourself feel loved and forgiven.

When you're finished, decide how you want to end this exercise and come back to the present.

Exercise: Meditation

Reflect on some of the following statements and verses, pausing with each one and letting yourself be aware of what physical feelings and emotional categories come to you as you do so. Try reading one at a time out loud. Try imagining hearing someone else read or speak them to you. Imagine the message of each one

SESSION 7

coming directly to you from someone you admire and trust.

Don't haunt a repentant sinner to the grave.

God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am there you may be also.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.

In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world!

Add additional sayings to these, descriptions of what you want to have come true for you. Meditate on them, visualize them happening, act on them as if they were already true for “by beholding we become changed.”

SESSION 8

“Reorienting Your Thinking and Relationships”

BARBARA HERNANDEZ

Exercise

For what have you been forgiven? Make a list of things you have done to hurt or anger other people.

What happened when you were forgiven? Do you remember how you felt and what you thought when you asked the other individual to forgive you, or when they made it clear that you were forgiven? How did you feel after you were forgiven and you realized that you were free of the shame and guilt of your actions?

RESOURCES

ORDER FORM

QTY	ITEM#	DESCRIPTION	COST	TOTAL
___	6169601	DVD Set	\$85	___
___	6169602	Coordinator Guide	\$ 7	___
___	6169603	Participant Guide	\$ 6	___
___	6169604	Advertising Flyers (electronic file)	Free	___
			Subtotal	\$ ___
			Tax	___
			S/H	___
			TOTAL	\$ ___

Name _____

Organization/Church _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ - _____ Email _____

Payment Method _____ Amount _____

(AMEX, Visa, MC, Discover, Check, Cash)

Date _____

Card # _____ Exp. Date ___ / ___ SVC _____

Signature _____

___ **Yes, we'd like to explore a date for Darold & Barbara
Bigger to do a Weekend Seminar**

Contact Us: darold@forgivenow.net

Prices subject to change

WEEKEND SEMINAR

BARBARA AND DAROLD BIGGER

SUGGESTED OUTLINE

1st evening: *Loosing Shannon*

- Introduction of weekend
- Show video clip (on DVD) of daughter Shannon
- Tell story of Shannon's murder, including our grief journey and what was helpful and what wasn't helpful for us.
- Congregational hymn: "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus"

2nd day morning: *Jesus the Model Forgiver*

- Darold – sermon "Jesus The Model Forgiver"
 - Scripture: Mark 14:27-31
 - Congregational hymn: "Chief of Sinners"

2nd day afternoon: *Forgiveness studies, What Forgiveness Is and Is Not, Becoming a Forgiving Person, Resources*

- Darold
 - Conducts "class" about forgiveness (using PowerPoint)
 - Incorporates his story of how forgiveness overcame him and then empowered him to become a forgiving person
- Barbara
 - Reads letter to Shannon
 - Shows slides of Shannon while reading (using PowerPoint)

Equipment needed

- DVD player (1st evening)
- Computer w/PowerPoint, screen and speaker connection (2nd day afternoon)

WEEKEND SEMINAR

Other

- Potluck dinner 2nd day between the sermon and afternoon session
- Childcare for 1st evening and 2nd day afternoon

Expenses

- Actual hotel costs
- Mileage at \$.43/mile or actual cost of commercial transportation
- Per diem with overnight stay \$46/person, \$69/couple; \$16/person no overnight stay with 2 purchased meals, \$8/person with 1 purchased meal.
- Any income that exceeds expenses benefits Micronesian children among whom Shannon volunteered a year of service.

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