

A. MORE OLD WINESKINS

- In the parable of New Wine, Jesus invited us to know Him more. He challenged us to beware of Old Wineskins that can't hold the abundant life and relationship He offers.
- We need the Spirit to help us recognize the old, and to lead us in the process of replacing them with the Newness that's available to us in Christ: Eph 4:22-27, 31-32-- Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. ²³ Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. ²⁴ Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. ²⁵ So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. ²⁶ And “don't sin by letting anger control you.” Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ for anger gives a foothold to the devil...³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. ³² Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.
- Unforgiveness is another one of the most subtle and detrimental Old Wineskins that may be present in our hearts. Let's ask HS to reveal it and deal with it.
- Insights:

B. ORIGINS

- The starting point for Unforgiveness is taking up an offense. Knowing this will help with our strategies of naming clearly and identifying the source of an Old Wineskin.
- Jesus told us that the behavior of others provides us with endless opportunities to be offended: Luke 17:1-- He said to the disciples, “It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe *to him* through whom they do come!
- Offense = “a trap-stick,” a bent stick on which the bait is fastened which the animal strikes against and so springs the trap, hence, a “snare,” or “stumbling block” (Strong's G4625; ISBE)
- The offensive behaviors of others trip us up. These are usually small irritants (not huge matters) that tempt us to criticize and/or judge the other person.
- We have a small window of time in which to decide how we will react to offense:

ACTION ⇒ REACTION

- During that time if we assign motives or doubt someone's character we overestimate ourselves (pride): James 4:12 NLT-- God alone, who gave the law, is the Judge. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to judge your neighbor?
- Satan, the Accuser, loves it when we react like he does. Night and day he devotes himself to bringing accusations against people and tempting us to do the same.
- [EX: Portland PCA Church on a scouting visit with ML]
- Instead of taking on a mindset of offense and accusation, let us chose to love one another: Pr 17:9 NIV-- Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends

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- If we take up an offense and then “repeat the matter” (either do it over and over or rehearse it in our minds) it will do damage to the relationship.
 - Insights:

C. FORGIVENESS

- When something causes a break in fellowship between two people, a spirit of separation (SOS) has interrupted the relationship. This could be from:
 - Repeated small offenses that are left unresolved
 - One large event that disrupts trust between the two parties
- When we allow separation to break off human relationship, it also has negative consequences in our relationship with God:
 - Mk 11:25 NLT-- But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.
 - Matt 5:23-24 NLT-- If you're presenting a sacrifice at the altar and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.
- Obviously God places very high value on forgiveness! After all, Jesus paid the ultimate price so that we could be redeemed and in relationship with Him.
- Forgiveness is costly for us, too. We must let go of whatever the other person cost us by their sinful actions, cancelling any debt or payback we might consider fair.
- We don't forgive because we feel like it, but because God asks us to respond as He did, as His New Creations in Christ. (Eph 4:32)
- While calculating the cost of forgiveness, it's needful to factor in the heavy cost of unforgiveness which impacts your spiritual, relational, physical, and mental life:
 - Heb 12:15 JBP-- Be careful that none of you fails to respond to the grace which God gives, for if he does there can very easily spring up in him a bitter spirit which is not only bad in itself but can also poison the lives of many others.
 - “Studies have found that the act of forgiveness can reap huge rewards for your health, lowering the risk of heart attack; improving cholesterol levels and sleep; and reducing pain, blood pressure, and levels of anxiety, depression and stress.” (hopkinsmedicine.org)
- In our fast paced lives, offense and unforgiveness can go unnoticed. Make it a regular practice in your time with the Lord to ask, “*Who do I need to forgive?*”
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
Lord, I want to be free to live a life that reflects Your love and mercy and grace. Please show me if there is someone I need to forgive?

- We forgive by faith and as an act of our will. Remember that our emotions may lag behind our choosing to forgive. Our feelings will eventually catch up.
- Forgiveness can be a process starting with the initial decision to forgive. Sometimes we need to go back and release and forgive specific wrongs that come to mind later.
- Insights:

D. MORE FORGIVENESS

- The need to forgive can extend beyond your relationships with other people.
- Sometimes we have reason to practice biblical forgiveness principles with:
 1. Ourselves
 - Because we are imperfect human beings, it's likely that some of our issues are the result of our own ignorance, sin or poor judgment.
 - Where this is the case, we need to extend forgiveness to ourselves, releasing any guilt, blame, shame, and other negative thoughts and feelings we may have harbored.
 - To withhold forgiveness from ourselves suggests that Jesus' sacrifice wasn't enough: Heb 9:14 NLT--Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.
 - By faith, and in obedience to God, forgive yourself as you would any other person.
 2. The Lord
 - It's not uncommon to place the blame on God for hurtful events in our lives. We may have anger or accusation toward Him for not preventing our pain in His sovereignty.
 - Obviously, God does no wrong nor does He perpetrate evil towards us. But for the sake of renewing our trust and reconnecting completely, we choose to release and forgive Him: Matt 11:6 NAS--Blessed is any person who does not take offense at Me.
- We can't be free from unforgiveness if we are unaware of its presence. Let's ask the Lord to search us, showing us where this Old Wineskin is present in our lives.
- *When we recognize it, let's use Ephesians 4:31-32, asking God to accomplish forgiveness by letting go of our negative feelings and choosing to forgive by faith.
- Mt 5:6-9 JBP--"Happy are those who are hungry and thirsty for goodness, for they will be fully satisfied! "Happy are the merciful, for they will have mercy shown to them! "Happy are the utterly sincere, for they will see God! "Happy are those who make peace, for they will be sons of God!
- Insights:

E. PERSONAL APPLICATION

- ONE THING

The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

- PROCESSING THE TRUTH

1. Forgiveness: Try adding this question to your devotional time on a regular basis: "*Lord, who do I need to forgive?*" Use these suggested steps to guide your prayer to forgive:
 - Lord, thank you for forgiving me completely and unconditionally.
 - In obedience to Your command to forgive others as You have forgiven me, I choose to forgive [name of person] for [list their specific words, attitudes, or actions that have been hurtful].
 - As I calculate what this person has cost me [name the costs and long term effects], I want to release them from anything I think they owe me.
 - Please forgive me for harboring [confess specific judgments, thoughts, emotions or other sinful responses] toward this person.
 - I choose to release him/her into Your hand. By faith, I receive the cleansing, healing and freedom that You have promised to those who forgive.
 - Fill me now, I pray, with your love and mercy as I move forward in this relationship.
2. Old Wineskins: Remember to focus on each day's troubles (short-term) while staying open to dealing with long-term issues as the Spirit leads.
 - Continue to ask the Lord which Old Wineskin to tackle next (pride, shame, or fear) and then work through it prayerfully:
 - Name It: Use the synonyms to help name it in a way that best describes it for you
 - Identify Its Source: let the Spirit take you to a time or repeated situation that contributed to the Old Wineskin being present in your life
 - Short Term Strategies: practice abiding, prayer, praise, gratitude, and meditation. Mix and match, trying different tactics based on where you are on any given day.
 - Long Term Strategies: while your New Wineskins (mindsets) are being formed, seek God's help in pursuing surrender, waiting on Him and greater faith and trust.