Study Guide

The Freedom of Forgiveness

Hebrews 12.15

1.      Sometimes we want people to sympathize with us in our hurts. The truth is, sympathy can provide temporary relief, but nothing short of forgiveness can procure lasting release. Why do you think people are content to wallow in self-pity when the release of forgiveness is available?

2.      Is your reaction to hurt or offense in your life an attempt to seek revenge? To wound the person who has wounded you? If so, explain how you feel that getting revenge or wounding your offender would resolve your problem. Would that resolution bring lasting peace, or only add to your pain as a victim? Are you seeking relief or release?

3.      Some responses to hurt and offense are not obvious. Instead of an outburst of anger or hope for revenge, there is the quiet, subtle eating away—the “gnawing teeth”—of a bitter heart. Is this your response to those who hurt you? Why can this kind of response be even more deadly than an outburst?

4.      What is your initial reaction to the concept of forgiveness? Do you react in denial, anger, self-righteousness, or judgment? Do you perhaps feel hostile toward the whole idea of forgiveness as a necessity?

5.      What characteristics in your life might indicate that you haven’t fully forgiven past hurts, even if you know in your head what you need to do?

6.      Make a list of those who you have not forgiven. Use this list to pray for that person, for your heart and seek God’s help in offering them forgiveness.