

# Presentation Outline

**Class:** Family Support

**Curriculum:** Forgiving the Past

**Time Frame:** 1hr. and 30 min.

**Facilitator:** Lauren Davis

**INTRODUCTION:** Forgiveness is without a doubt one of the most essential life skills required for true happiness and fulfillment. For nothing is more crippling to the human spirit than carrying the burden of past offenses. And even with all the amazing advances in science and technology in the modern world, recent studies have shown that the number one cause of physical illness is simply an unwillingness to forgive. In short, without forgiveness, our lives become filled with bitterness, disease and frustration. And so today's subject is 'Forgiving the Past' - an issue of tremendous importance to us all.

**MAJOR PROBLEMS:** Here are three basic causes of unforgiveness.

- **Pride** - When we refuse to accept hurts and offenses as an inevitable part of life, we become intolerant of the faults of others. This leads to:
  1. Bitterness
  2. Meanness
  3. Poor health
- **Pain** - Offensive behavior is hurtful, which often creates hostility. It's impossible to forgive in excessive anger. Instead, the pain and hostility leads to:
  1. Emotional abuse
  2. Verbal abuse
  3. Physical abuse
- **Unfairness** - Forgiving becomes difficult when we believe offenses toward us are going unpunished. This sense of unfairness leads to:
  1. **Condemnation** - The "Dirty Harry" syndrome.
  2. **Self-hatred** - When we don't forgive others, we can't forgive ourselves.
  3. **Distrust** - We begin to believe that everybody is "up to no good".

**SOLUTIONS:**

- **Let go and let God** - When we become intolerant and refuse to forgive, we end up taking the law into our own hands, which is unfair and unjust. But we must not judge one another. Nor should we condemn one another. We must simply allow what goes around to come around. And we must never question the heart or intentions of others, but be willing to extend the benefit of the doubt.
- **Don't wait for apologies** - An unwillingness to forgive hurts others, but it hurts ourselves more. We must not allow ourselves to be held hostage to past offenses. Even when others refuse to acknowledge their wrongdoing, we can still forgive, be healed and get on with our lives.
- **Live in the now** - There's a good reason why the windshield in a car is much larger than the rear view mirror. Just as when we're driving, if we focus more on where we've been in life than where we're going, we endanger our lives and the lives of others. Don't lose today looking back at yesterday.

**INTERACTION:**

- Pass out and read literature on 'Forgiving the Past'.
- Have a Q&A session on the literature.
- Open the floor for general discussion.

**CONCLUSION: In order to forgive the hurts and offenses of the past, we must first accept the simple fact that none of us are perfect. We must not condemn one another; for when we judge each other, we judge ourselves. We must also realize that even when offending parties are unwilling or unable to acknowledge their offenses, we can still be set free from the pain and bitterness that poisons our lives. And finally, we must simply be willing to let go of the past, and begin to look toward a bright future - a future beyond pride, pain and injustice; but full of hope and promise; a future filled with joy and peace.**