PWOC

Protestant Women of the Chapel

Materials:
-Paper/white board and markers
-Colored pencils (3 per person)
-Blank index cards
-Crosses, candles
-Optional: Judge costume (i.e. graduation gown)

WORKSHOP: FORGIVENESS

by Kathleen DeKrey

LEADER'S GUIDE

RELEVANCE: Forgiveness is hard- it just is. When an offense takes place, we want justice but to leave that justice in the hands of an invisible God can be challenging. If we can begin to grasp the justice that has been served *on our behalf*, we can begin to release our hold on seeking our own retribution. The resulting benefits are truly worth the risk.

CONTEXT: This material is appropriate for multiple settings including a PWOC Program, workshop or even leadership training. Forgiveness is a key and essential concept in all of our relationships and finds application in marriage, parenting, friendships, PWOC Board interactions, etc.

TIME: 65-75 minutes

HOOK YOUR AUDIENCE: (5 minutes)

Note to Trainer: For visual effect and to pique curiosity, you may choose to do the first portion of your workshop in a judge costume (could just be a graduation gown).

We're talking today about forgiveness. That's a pretty big topic. Really, the whole Bible is about forgiveness; it is the theme of the whole book! I will not be talking about *why* we should forgive. I think we all understand that forgiveness is important- foremost because God has commanded us to forgive- and we also understand it is in our own best interests not to carry corrosive bitterness through life. Having said all of that, forgiveness just isn't easy.

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Note to Trainer: Feel free to insert your own stories here. The more personal you can make your workshop, the better. Your participants will engage with you on a deeper level.

I have two stories about forgiveness. The first one is a little silly, but the second one is quite serious. The silly story of course is about me. It's about me one very lovely day and I'm bebopping down the road of life and I'm having a great day. The sun is shining and all is good. I'm waving at my friends I'm having a great time. Along comes someone who is (metaphorically speaking) dragging a manure spreader along behind them. I wave sweetly at them because even people who have manure spreaders need friends. This person serves into my lane, dumps a load of the you-know-what right in front of me, steps on the gas, and speeds away (all spiritually and metaphorically speaking of course). Drive-by sin! So there I am! I fall flat into the middle of it. And now there's a huge mess. Someone is going to have to clean up. I am a stinky mess. Everyone will probably think it is my mess! I am mad. Inside my head I can hear all of the things that we all know. " Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord. I will repay." (My nostrils are flaring.) "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." I know this is not about me. I know that I have to forgive, to let it go. But, oh, it is so hard to do! At that point I realized that, in fact, my body was stiff, my hands were clenched, and my face had an awful look on it. (I'm glad none of you were there to see me.) I tried to let it go. But not in the manner of letting go of butterflies or baby birds. I threw it at heaven, but it was still stuck to me. I really wanted it gone. I threw it again. This time I said one of my favorite Bible verses. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." I think I might have stomped my foot at this point! By God's grace, He did take my anger away, to the point that the memory of the inciting incident is gone. What He did not take away was my awareness that drive-by sin happens. I became very aware that I too was casting the detritus of my life carelessly on other people and in their paths. It is very possible to hurt and to sin against people without ever realizing that it happened. So, if any of my spiritual Coke cans or apple cores have hit the windshields of your cars, metaphorically speaking, I do apologize. Sin is like that. Sometimes sin turns out to be the little rock I put in my shoe because it was so pretty and I thought it might be a diamond. It's not until I have walked a long way with that "possible diamond" in my shoes that I realized that it is not a rare treasure but a grudge. It is causing me pain and interfering with my walk with God. I need to get rid of it. Sometimes it is something someone else has given me. "Here, take this. It is valuable. Keep it near your heart, protected…" and I have thoughtlessly slipped it into my pocket. Later, I find that I am holding someone else's grudges and their unforgiveness. Sometimes fear and prejudice come to us that way.

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My second story is also about drive-by sin entering someone's life but instead of manure, the load left behind was radioactive. This story happened before I was born. A friend of my mother's sent her seven-year-old son out to the mailbox to get the mail.

He was struck and killed by a drunk driver. Now I come from a very small town. That little boy was buried in the cemetery about three blocks away from where the drunk driver lived. The drunk driver and this mother continued to live in the same town to the end of their lives. She walked daily through her life as a wife and as a mother of five remaining children. She was my mother's good friend. She was my Sunday school teacher. And every day she knew that the drunk driver had had no punishment for his sin.

MAKE YOUR POINT 1: SIN IS INJUSTICE AND INJUSTICE IS SIN

(10 minutes)

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus calls those in need of forgiveness "debtors" or "trespassers."

- **Matthew 6:12-15** And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses. (NKJV)

Knowing that forgiveness is commanded by God, expected of us by God, and knowing that it is the best thing for us to do, why is it still so hard?

Encourage participant interaction. Make a list of reasons: ***Why is forgiveness hard?***

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 1: (10-15 minutes)

God had complaints against His people, the people He had chosen as his own, and that He had loved and cared for. God makes His case against them in many places in the Bible.

Let's look at some of the verses in the Bible about these sins against God. Work with a partner or in a group of 3. Your group will identify the injustices against God- make a list. You can call yourselves a law firm if you like. You will be representing God and discovering and disclosing the injustices

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against Him. *Main idea of this activity: God has the same complaints against the children of Israel that we have about those who sin against us.*

> *Note to Trainer: Divide the passages between the partners/ groups. Assign which passages you'd like each group to work on. Also note that the sub-bullets are not included in the Participants Version- they are to help you guide the discussion.*

- **2 Chronicles 33:6** *Also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.*
    - Sins of the king.

- **Isaiah 1:2-4** *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.' Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward.*
    - My own children whom I have loved and cared for have disowned me!

- **Isaiah 5:1-7** *Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: my Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. 'And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briers and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it.' For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.*
    - God has carefully done all He could! He certainly did not deserve the treatment they gave him! Talk about lack of respect! Talk about ingratitude!

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- **Isaiah 5:18-25** *Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as if with a cart rope; that say, 'Let Him make speed and hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it.' Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away justice from the righteous man! Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore the anger of the LORD is aroused against His people; He has stretched out His hand against them and stricken them, and the hills trembled. Their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets.*
    - Liars! Know it alls! Drunkards! Willing to subvert justice for a price!

- **Isaiah 10:1-3** *Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees, who write misfortune, which they have prescribed to rob the needy of justice, and to take what is right from the poor of My people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless. What will you do in the day of punishment, and in the desolation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your glory?*
    - What they are doing is so obviously wrong! They intentionally prey on the vulnerable and helpless! They are planning it!

- **Isaiah 30:8-11** *Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and note it on a scroll, that it may be for time to come, forever and ever: that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the LORD; who say to the seers, 'Do not see,' and to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits. Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.'*
    - They want to believe lies!

- **Isaiah 31:1** *Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!*
    - Are they blind? What kind of a choice is this?

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- **Isaiah 33:1** *Woe to you who plunder, though you have not been plundered; and you who deal treacherously, though they have not dealt treacherously with you! When you cease plundering, you will be plundered; when you make an end of dealing treacherously, they will deal treacherously with you.*
    - Aggressors!

- **Hosea 4:10-13** *For they shall eat, but not have enough; they shall commit harlotry, but not increase; because they have ceased obeying the LORD. Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart. My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God. They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops, and burn incense on the hills, under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters commit harlotry, and your brides commit adultery.*
    - God recounts the steps of the sinful path that have led the people away from Him.

- **Micah 6:1-5** *Hear now what the LORD says: 'Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O you mountains, the LORD's complaint, and you strong foundations of the earth; for the LORD has a complaint against His people, And He will contend with Israel. 'O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me. For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O My people, remember now What Balak king of Moab counseled, And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, From Acacia Grove to Gilgal, That you may know the righteousness of the LORD.'*
    - Not my fault!
    - Is this how you repay me for my goodness?

- **Micah 6:10-12** *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the short measure that is an abomination? Shall I count pure those with the wicked scales, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.*
    - Lies, lies, lies!
    - How much worse can you get?
    - Am I just supposed to overlook all of this?

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Share out: **What is God's case? What are the injustices against Him?** (Witness for the prosecution? Lawyers?) *Allow groups to share their findings. Make a list next to the "Why is Forgiveness Hard" list of all the injustices from the Scripture passages.*

Some answers to look for are:

- *God's people had turned their backs on Him.*
- *Israel had repeatedly and knowingly sinned against God and had not repented.*
- *God is angry about injustice and oppression and aggression.*
- *Bottom line: God has the same complaints against the children of Israel that we have about those who sin against us.*

Review the list and ask: **Are these real, valid complaints? Has injustice occurred? Yes. They are serious charges, real offenses- real sin, real trespasses.**

Forgiveness is hard because there is an actual debt owed. Forgiveness does not mean we merely "forget about it." Forgiveness acknowledges the debt owed and makes the decision, with God's help, to drop the charges.

We want justice. God wants justice.

MAKE YOUR POINT 2: GOD IS A RIGHTEOUS JUDGE AND GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS JUSTICE (2 minutes)

Take off the robe. **In the Kingdom of God, judges are neither elected nor appointed. God is Judge. He has claimed that for Himself forever.**

Hebrews 10:30-31 says, "For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Judgment is God's business, not ours; we need to stay out of it! His justice is sure and complete, no matter what "evidence" we see. All sin will be accounted for.

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 2: (10-15 minutes)

What kind of Judge do we have? What is God like? Work with a partner or in a small group of 3. Look at the following verses about the justice of God. For each verse, record a few words that describe God's character (specifically in regards to His justice).

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Note to Trainer: These sub-bullets are not included in the Participant's Guide. They are for your reference only. Your participants will use their own words- which is preferable. Have each group review all of the verses, rather than assigning specific passages. This activity will go quickly and the passages are brief.

- **Psalm 75:2-5** *When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved; I set up its pillars firmly. Selah. I said to the boastful, 'Do not deal boastfully,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up the horn. Do not lift up your horn on high; Do not speak with a stiff neck.'*
    - Judge uprightly.
- **Psalm 103:6** *The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.*
    - Righteousness and justice.
- **Psalm 140:12-*13*** *I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your presence.*
    - Justice for the poor.
- ***Psalm 146:5-9*** *Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God, Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever, Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners. The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; The LORD raises those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turns upside down.*
    - *God loves the righteous*
    - *God cares for the vulnerable and oppressed*
    - *God is the undoing of the wicked.*
    - God is the creator. He *<u>is right.</u>*
- **Isaiah 2:17-18** *The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; The LORD alone will be exalted in that day, but the idols He shall utterly abolish.*
    - God demands the respect that is His due.

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- **Isaiah 3:13-15** *The LORD stands up to plead, and stands to judge the people. The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders of His people and His princes: 'For you have eaten up the vineyard; the plunder of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing My people and grinding the faces of the poor?' Says the Lord GOD of hosts.*
    - God will stand against even the elders and princes if they have been unjust.

- **Isaiah 3:16** *But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.*

- **Isaiah 6:1-3** *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!'*
    - The holiness of God.

- **Isaiah 28:17** *Also I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the plummet; the hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters will overflow the hiding place.*
    - God will use righteousness and justice for his standards of measurement.
    - Nothing will be hidden.

- **Jeremiah 9:23-24** *Thus says the LORD: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.*
    - Loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness: these are the things that matter to God.

- **Nahum 1:2-3** *God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; The LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies; and will not at all acquit the wicked.*
    - Will not acquit the wicked. No getting off the hook!

Sum it up: **So what sort of Judge do we find in these verses?** *Allow the groups to throw out popcorn answers (holy, righteous…).*

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What will He do about sin? What is His standard? *Allow some input.*

Briefly ask:

- **Is He intimidated by power or money?**
- **Can He be bought?**
- **Can He be fooled or flattered?**
- **Is God dismissive of sin? Would he tell us to "just forget it" "Get over it" "It's no big deal"?**

MAKE YOUR POINT 3: GOD'S FORGIVENESS SOLUTION (2 minutes)

Recap:

- **Sin is injustice and injustice is sin. Sin demands justice. The wages of sin is death.**
- **God is a righteous judge and God's righteousness demands justice. God is all about justice. God's nature demands justice. Justice is God's job.**

- **And God is also all about love, all about mercy, all about grace.**

What did God do about this injustice problem? God's solution: Christ died for us. "In that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

We made the mess, God cleaned it up.

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 3: (10-15 minutes)

I call this exercise "makeover by God."

Go through the list of verses about the death of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Using two different colored pencils, underline who we were *before* (one color) and who we are *after* (second color) our "makeover."

> *Note to Trainer: Make sure the two colored pencils each person receives are contrasting colors- easily distinguishable from each other. A third color will also be used later in the activity to represent the work of Christ. You may want to provide a red colored pencil for the third color.*

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- **Romans 5:6-11** *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

- **2 Corinthians 5:21** *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

- **Ephesians 1:7-10** *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself…*

- **Ephesians 2:1-9** *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

- **Ephesians 2:12-22** *…that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were*

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near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

- **Colossians 1:19-23** *For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

- **1 Peter 3:18** *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit…*

- **1 John 3:1** *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*

- **Philippians 2: 5-8** *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Share: **What are some of the "before" items that you underlined? In other words, who are we apart from the forgiveness of God?** *Allow participants to answer. Some possible answers to look for are:*

- We were enemies of God.
- We were not on speaking terms with God.
- We had deeply offended God, and we did not care, but continued to go our own way.
- We sided with God's enemies.

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Now what are some of the "after" items you underlined? Who are we after God has forgiven us? *Allow participants to answer. Some possible answers to look for are:*

- Righteous, holy
- Alive
- Reconciled to God
- Justified

How did that happen? What about justice? What exactly did you do to deserve those benefits? *Nothing.*

The In-Between: *Now have your participants go through the verses one more time with a third colored pencil (you may choose to use only red pencils for this). Have them underline what happened in between the "before" and "after." What happened? What caused the "after" result? The in-between, of course, is the work of Christ on the cross. The price that He paid is what purchased all the benefits we have of His forgiveness.*

APPLY IT TO LIFE: (5-10 minutes)

Are you getting the picture of what it cost God to forgive us? What is the cost of forgiveness? *(pause, let the question sit for a few seconds)*

How much of the price has already been paid? *(pause)*

Even though the debt has already been paid, are there debts that you are still trying to collect? Is there someone in your life that you feel "owes you?" *(pause)*

How is God speaking to your heart? Is there someone you have refused to forgive? Are you willing to let go of your offense? Is there someone that you need to approach to ask for forgiveness? Are you willing to do that?

Pray together The Lord's Prayer. Invite women to remain as long as they would like to pray.

Hand out forgiveness cards. Encourage women to write what God is pressing on their hearts. Give instructions about taking it to the "foot of the cross." Give instructions about how it can be burned or destroyed in some way. (Careful not to set off alarms or sprinklers!!!)

Have several crosses throughout the room. Invite women to leave their burdens of bitterness and unforgiveness at the foot of the cross. Have fire-proof dishes where forgiveness cards can be burned.

Have people available to pray with those participants who desire one-on-one prayer.

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PWOC

Protestant Women of the Chapel

WORKSHOP: FORGIVENESS

by Kathleen DeKrey

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

RELEVANCE: Forgiveness is hard- it just is. When an offense takes place, we want justice but to leave that justice in the hands of an invisible God can be challenging. If we can begin to grasp the justice that has been served *on our behalf*, we can begin to release our hold on seeking our own retribution. The resulting benefits are truly worth the risk.

I. SIN IS INJUSTICE AND INJUSTICE IS SIN

- In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus calls those in need of forgiveness "debtors" or "trespassers."

- **Why is forgiveness hard?**

- God had complaints against His people. He makes His case against them in many places in the Bible.

- **ACTIVITY:** Work with a partner or in a group of 3. Using the Scripture passage(s) you are assigned, your group will identify the injustices against God- make a list. You can call yourselves a law firm if you like. You will be representing God and discovering and disclosing the injustices against Him.

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Use this space to list the complaints you find:

- **2 Chronicles 33:6**
- **Isaiah 1:2-4**
- **Isaiah 5:1-7**
- **Isaiah 5:18-25**
- **Isaiah 10:1-3**
- **Isaiah 30:8-11**
- **Isaiah 31:1**
- **Isaiah 33:1**
- **Hosea 4:10-13**
- **Micah 6:1-5**
- **Micah 6:10-12**

Share out: What is God's case? What are the injustices against Him?

II. GOD IS A RIGHTEOUS JUDGE AND GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMANDS JUSTICE

- Hebrews 10:30-31

- Judgment is God's business, not ours; we need to stay out of it! His justice is sure and complete, no matter what "evidence" we see. All sin will be accounted for.

- ACTIVITY: What kind of Judge do we have? What is God like? Work with a partner or in a small group of 3. Look at the following verses about the justice of God. For each verse, record a few words that describe God's character (specifically in regards to His justice).

  - **Psalm 75:2-5** *When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved; I set up its pillars firmly. Selah. I said to the boastful, 'Do not deal boastfully,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up the horn. Do not lift up your horn on high; Do not speak with a stiff neck.'*
  - **Psalm 103:6** *The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.*
  - **Psalm 140:12-*13*** *I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your presence.*

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- ***Psalm 146:5-9*** *Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God, Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever, Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners. The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; The LORD raises those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; but the way of the wicked He turns upside down.*

- **Isaiah 2:17-18** *The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; The LORD alone will be exalted in that day, but the idols He shall utterly abolish.*

- **Isaiah 3:13-15** *The LORD stands up to plead, and stands to judge the people. The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders of His people and His princes: 'For you have eaten up the vineyard; the plunder of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing My people and grinding the faces of the poor?' Says the Lord GOD of hosts.* .

- **Isaiah 3:16** *But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.*

- **Isaiah 6:1-3** *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!'*

- **Isaiah 28:17** *Also I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the plummet; the hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters will overflow the hiding place.*

- **Jeremiah 9:23-24** *Thus says the LORD: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.*

- **Nahum 1:2-3** *God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; The LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies; and will not at all acquit the wicked.*

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- ***Sum it up:*** So what sort of Judge do we find in these verses? What will He do about sin? What is His standard?

III. GOD'S FORGIVENESS SOLUTION

- **God is all about love, all about mercy, all about grace.**

- What did God do about the injustice problem? God's solution: Christ died for us. "In that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

- We made the mess, God cleaned it up.

- ACTIVITY: **"**Makeover by God." Go through the list of verses about the death of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Using two different colored pencils, underline who we were *before* (one color) and who we are *after* (second color) our "makeover."

    - **Romans 5:6-11** *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*
    - **2 Corinthians 5:21** *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*
    - **Ephesians 1:7-10** *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself…*

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- **Ephesians 2:1-9** *And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

- **Ephesians 2:12-22** *…that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

- **Colossians 1:19-23** *For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

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- **1 Peter 3:18** *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit…*

- **1 John 3:1** *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*

- **Philippians 2: 5-8** *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

APPLY IT TO LIFE:

- What is the cost of forgiveness?

- How much of the price has already been paid?

- Even though the debt has already been paid, are there debts that you are still trying to collect? Is there someone in your life that you feel "owes you?"

- How is God speaking to your heart? Is there someone you have refused to forgive? Are you willing to let go of your offense? Is there someone that you need to approach to ask for forgiveness? Are you willing to do that?

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