

Theme & Passages	Growing Together: Forgiveness Psalm 51: 1-2, 10-12, Genesis 50:14-21 & Philemon: 8-16	Notes prepared by Stephen Elmes & Paul Lambert
Welcome (10 mins)	How easy do you find it to forgive?	
Worship (20 mins)	Read Psalm 51 together. Share your responses. Worship together using the song: 'Come to the Altar': https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=_VUcGrDGYr8	
Working with God (20 mins): Evangelism Discipleship Compassion Justice Creation Care	<p>This week, John Newman, told the story of his life, faith, family and work. Born in 1943 in Wales, it wasn't until he was nearly 30 that 2 Christians at work shared their faith and John found forgiveness and faith. He immediately saw that faith was not "pew filling" but an active servant of God in his family, community, workplace and local church. It also involves being ready to share his faith whenever an opportunity arises. As John puts it "My frontline is as soon as I wake up" and asking what God wants of us.</p> <p>There were three aspects of John's story that are particularly relevant to this week's sermon:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Service</i> – God calls us to be servants of all. For John, this included leading Children's groups, being a bus driver for a Disability Group, running Marriage Courses and spending a lot of time helping their 2 daughters with the Grandchildren. So where is God calling us to serve now? 2. <i>Forgiveness</i> – John had some challenges both with a member of the family and a difficult church situation where he had to let go of the hurt that had been caused. Only when these difficulties let go of these, did he find the release back into the joy of life and service. Where is unforgiveness holding us back? 3. <i>God works with us</i> – John related how he just began serving God and he was directed to important areas of service (e.g. marriage course). What new or different area of service / endeavour is God calling you into? <p>Relevant Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-13 – We are called into "works of service".</p>	
Word (20-25 mins)	<p>In his preaching this week, Steve explored what it means to be part of a <i>forgiven and forgiving community</i> – drawing on two biblical stories.</p> <p>The first was the tail end of Joseph's story, which you can read in Genesis 50:14-21.</p> <p><i>Share your reactions to this scene in Joseph's life.</i> <i>What enabled Joseph to forgive his brothers?</i> <i>How might this insight help us to forgive others?</i></p> <p>The second was the story of Philemon and Onesimus – a story that is discovered by some reading between the lines of a letter from Paul to Philemon. Onesimus was a slave who, it seemed, had run away from his master (Philemon) and possibly stolen from him. Encountering Paul in Rome, he had come to faith. Paul writes a letter to Philemon to encourage him to forgive Onesimus and receive him back as a brother</p>	

in Christ. You can read part of the letter in Philemon: 8-16.

Paul encourages Philemon to enact the gospel – to live out what it means to be part of a forgiven and forgiving community.

What might it mean for us to enact this truth today?

Consider breaking into pairs or threes to share more personally about this and to pray for one another.