

LEARNING HOW TO FORGIVE: AN
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR
BAPTIST NATIONALS TO USE
AMONG WAR VICTIMS
IN THE FORMER
YUGOSLAVIA

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LEARNING HOW TO FORGIVE: AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. STATEMENT OF MINISTRY PURPOSE	1
Statement of Ministry Goals	2
Background Information	2
Limitations	5
Definitions	6
Research Methodology	6
Pre and Post-Questionnaires	7
Daily Small Group Sessions	8
Concluding Group Leader Sessions	8
2. A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF FORGIVENESS AS A FOUNDATION FOR RECONCILIATION	10
A Biblical Understanding of Forgiveness and Reconciliation	10
The Need for Forgiveness	14
Mercy: The Basis for Forgiveness	19
<i>Shalom</i> : The Goal of Forgiveness	20
Reconciliation: The Results of Forgiveness Received	23
Matthew 18:21-35	28
Luke 7:36-50	32
3. RELEVANT HISTORICAL AND SOCIETAL ASPECTS OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION AS IT RELATES TO VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS	35
A History of Hatred in the Balkans	36

The Holocaust and Its Similarities to the Balkan Conflict	41
Extreme Nationalism	43
“Ethnic Politics”	43
Dehumanizing Rhetoric Via Propaganda	44
War Creates Opportunities for Genocide	45
Average Folks Become Murders with the Government’s Blessing	46
The Cycle of Revenge	47
Forgiveness and Reconciliation: An Alternative to the Cycle of Revenge	48
Dynamics of Forgiveness and Reconciliation	49
Being Forgiven	49
Forgiving Oneself	50
How Do You Forgive the Unrepentant?	51
Is There Justification for Withholding Forgiveness?	51
Physical and Physiological Benefits of Forgiveness	52
Conclusion: A Biblical Model for Forgiveness and Recon- ciliation for a Divided People in the Balkans	54
4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEACHING MODULE	56
Preparing for the Seminar	57
An Introduction to the Focus Group Sessions	58
An Introduction of the Pre and Post-Questionnaires	59
An Introduction of the Seven Teaching Sessions	60
Session 1: “Life is Not Fair”.	62
Session 2: “Forgiveness Provides a Way for Reconciliation”	62
Session 3: “The Sins of a Great King”	63
Session 4: “A Case Study Focusing on the Dynamics of Forgiveness and Reconciliation”	64
Session 5: “New Covenant Forgiveness and Reconciliation”	65

Session 6: “New Testament Case Studies”	66
Session 7: “What Will I Do?”	67
Completing the Post-Questionnaire	68
5. EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT	70
A Summary of the Results of the Seminar	70
The Background of the Seminar Participants	71
The Participants Understanding of God	72
Basic Views of Religion and Christianity	73
The Participants’ Understanding of Forgiveness	74
The Participants’ Understanding of Reconciliation	81
The Participants’ Personal Evaluation of the Seminar	84
An Evaluation of the Ministry Tools	86
An Evaluation of the Pre and Post-Questionnaire	86
An Evaluation of the Session Material	87
An Evaluation of the Participant Small Group Sessions	88
Conclusion and Summary	88
Future Use	89
6. APPENDICES	
A. Map of the Former Yugoslavia	90
B. Leader Study Guides	91
C. Focus Group Questions	122
D. Pre-Questionnaire	125
E. Post-Questionnaire	130
F. Daily Seminar Schedule	136
G. Group Demographics	137
7. BIBLIOGRAPHY	138

Chapter 1

STATEMENT OF MINISTRY PURPOSE

As the wall was falling in Berlin, so were the national boundaries in the land once known as Yugoslavia. This country, whose name translates “the South Slavs,” began its long and arduous process in search for a national identity which would ultimately lead to the division of one country into five new countries.¹ These new countries are named Bosnia-Herzegovina (usually referred to simply as Bosnia), Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Yugoslavia.² Following the example of the populace, the National Baptist Union of Yugoslavia began to disintegrate into separate national bodies identified with their nationalistic and geographic constituency. This resulted in the formation of five new Baptist Unions.³ During the four years of the war in the former Yugoslavia, member churches of the five Baptist Unions were inundated with war victims. Baptists responded admirably to this crisis utilizing a variety of resources offered to them by different agencies to provide for both physical and spiritual needs. One recurring theme among these war victims is the issue of forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiving perpetrators of war crimes is no easy task. Leading war victims into an understanding of the dynamics of forgiveness has been a challenge for National Baptists in the former

¹ See Appendix A, a map of the former Yugoslavia.

²Yugoslavia was first recognized as a country following World War I. The name "Yugoslavia" has been retained by the Serbian people occupying Serbia and Montenegro, two republics of the former Yugoslavia.

³National Baptist Unions have been formed in Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Serbia. The Croatian Baptist Union works with Croats from a Catholic background and with Bosnian Muslims. The Macedonian Baptist Union works primarily with Macedonians, Bulgarians, and Serbs from Orthodox backgrounds. They also work with Albanians and Gypsies from mixed religious backgrounds. The Slovenian Baptist Union works with Slovenes who are from a Catholic background. There are two Unions in Serbia, one in the northern region, the other in the southern region. Their work is primarily among the Serbian Orthodox.

Yugoslavia. Culturally sensitive material written specifically to address this issue is in short supply. Therefore, it is the purpose of this project to provide a flexible instructional tool to be used by Baptist Unions of the former Yugoslavia to help teach war victims how an understanding of God's forgiveness toward all persons can help them to forgive those who have caused them great pain and suffering.

Statement of Ministry Goals

This project has four goals. The first goal is to develop a seven lesson teaching module focusing on the biblical, theological, and sociological aspects of forgiveness relevant to war victims living in the former Yugoslavia. The second goal is to test this teaching module over a one week period on a group of war victims who will be visiting a Christian rehabilitation center in Crikvenica, Croatia. The third goal is to evaluate, revise, and adapt the teaching module based on feedback received from retreat participants and group leaders. The final goal will be to prepare this material so that it can be offered to the Baptist Unions of the former Yugoslavia for use in their ministries among war victims in their countries.

Background Information

My wife and I have been serving with the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention since June, 1988. Our first assignment took us to Belgrade, Yugoslavia where I served as a church planter, general evangelist, and Bible school teacher. After completing our first furlough, we returned to Belgrade in July of 1992. At that time I began to serve as the human needs and relief coordinator for the former Yugoslavia. It became difficult to live in Belgrade and minister throughout Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia so in the summer of 1993, we moved to Slovenia, by then a peaceful country of the former Yugoslavia. Since August 1992, I have served as the Mission Administrator for the South

Europe Mission comprising the five countries of the former Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece. My secondary function is serving as the relief coordinator for human needs ministries in the mission. We have concurrent projects running in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, and Greece.

By the end of this year, it is estimated that three million dollars of relief aid will be given by the Foreign Mission Board to national Baptist relief organizations working throughout the former Yugoslavia. This money has been used to purchase food, medications, corn seed, cattle, and a variety of other items which have raised the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of war victims. Along with financial assistance, the Foreign Mission Board has provided short term specialists to work with war victims in various ministries. We have provided Bibles, Christian growth materials, and evangelistic materials to believers assisting them in their struggle to bring the Word of God to their people. This work has been a Herculean effort on the part of a Spartan group of believers to minister to hurting people in their midst.

Living and working in this context has motivated me to develop a ministry project which could be used as a tool by the national Baptists working with these people. One subject which has often surfaced as I have reflected over my work with these people has been forgiveness and reconciliation. To the casual observer it should be obvious that the need for forgiveness and reconciliation are prominent themes in the lives of residents of the former Yugoslavia.

Unfortunately, however, the morning paper and talk show hosts only provide a snapshot of the intense turmoil and suffering which are daily endured by the people. An estimated 250,000 men, women, and children have been killed and another 2 million plus have been driven from their homes during this short four-year period. War crimes and associated atrocities have dominated the news, portraying people who have suffered undeservingly at the hands of former

neighbors and friends. These acts of injustice have left their mark on the countryside of this land, in the home place of its people, and in the minds of its children. Serious and lasting damage has been caused to the present and future generation of children in the Balkans. These children's memories bear marks which are difficult to forget and will serve as tenders for tomorrow's fires. History has proven this to be true in the Balkans where blood feuds are common and where forgiveness and reconciliation are foreign terms. Nothing illustrates this better than slogans, folk ditties, and songs which people sing. Seven years ago it was humorous to observe subtle expressions of selfhood and independence. During a rival Belgrade-Zagreb soccer game in the Red Star Stadium in Belgrade, the Croats from Zagreb began chanting against the Serbs: "Gypsies, gypsies, gypsies" The Serbian response can only be appreciated by an American: "We have a McDonalds, we have a McDonalds" Just two years later and on the eve of the break-out of war in Yugoslavia, war slogans and songs were emerging from the basements of seclusion to find an avenue of expression on the walking streets of the major cities. These ditties bore no semblance to humorous anecdotes. In Belgrade, Serbia (Yugoslavia) one could hear the following:

Comrade Slobo (Milosevic), send salads,
There will be meat galore,
We'll be slaughtering Croats.

Another one from Zagreb, Croatia went:

Mother of God, Queen of Croats,
Bring us back Ante Pavlić,
So we can flush out Serbs again,
Half put to knife, half string up on the willows.⁴

As Christians living in the midst of this hatred and suffering, national Baptists are trying to preach God's love and acceptance of all people. Their

⁴Cvijeto Job, "Yugoslavia's Ethnic Furies," *Foreign Policy*, 92 (Fall 1993), 52.

message represents one lonely beacon shining in a sea of sorrow. On occasion, a person will grasp the real meaning of this message and their life will be changed. Christians in this land want to offer more to these people than just bread and water. They want to offer the Eternal Bread of Life and Water in a dynamic way that will change people's lives and restore hope to a hopeless generation. In various settings throughout Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia, Christians are proclaiming God's message to hurting people. Their call for help has encouraged me to develop this project. I chose this project because I expect that it will be a flexible instructional tool to be used by Baptist Unions of the former Yugoslavia to help teach war victims how an understanding of God's forgiveness toward all persons can help them to forgive those who have caused them great pain and suffering.

Limitations

Concentrated work among refugees by the national Baptists of the former Yugoslavia is currently taking place in Bosnia, Croatia, and Yugoslavia.⁵ These three regions vary greatly making one unified work by two Baptist Unions very difficult to coordinate. Because of the linguistic differences, nationalistic tensions, geographical barriers, and various difficulties placed upon the people by the war, this project will be limited in its scope. It would be ideal to develop this material in each language group and to test it among its people. This test project will be limited to one group which will be attending a Baptist rehabilitation center in Croatia for a time of rest and retreat from the war. The group will be made up of people who live in either Bosnia or Croatia. They will be Bosnian from an Islamic or Catholic background or Croat from a Catholic background. This group

⁵Work among war victims in Bosnia is being conducted by the Serbian Baptist Unions in Serbian controlled areas of Bosnia and by the Croatian Baptist Union in both Croat and Bosnian-Muslim controlled areas.

will have a high percentage of agnostics or atheists. All of the training material will be written in English. Translations of the materials will be produced by the various Unions into their local dialects. Union leadership will be responsible for translating, producing, and adapting the final material to meet their needs.

Definitions

“War victim” will be the general term used to describe anyone who has suffered from hostilities resulting from armed conflict. It is generally understood that this person is a civilian victim and not a military casualty. A “displaced person” is a “war victim” who has been forced to leave his or her home as a result of the armed conflict. The term “displaced person” is used as a synonym for “refugee”.

Research Methodology

The relevance of this project has already been determined through a process of trial and error on behalf of the Baptist nationals who have been working with war victims over the past four years. I have been privileged to be a part of the ministry of the various Baptist Unions as they have struggled to identify physical and spiritual needs among war victims in their country or republic. The Foreign Mission Board has assisted them by providing human resources and financial aid to develop, evaluate, and adapt their ministry programs to be more effective in their efforts to target specific ministry groups. One ministry need which we have identified has been the development of a flexible teaching tool to be used in a variety of settings focusing on issues of forgiveness and reconciliation which can be adapted by these Unions and their humanitarian relief workers to their ministry settings. This is the intention of this ministry project. The intention of this project will be evaluated in three ways. They are:

(1) the use of both pre and post-questionnaires completed by the retreat participants, (2) daily small group feedback sessions and (3) concluding evaluation sessions attended by myself, the group leaders, and the seminar leader. The validity of this project will be determined based on a review of four evaluation tools. Here is a summary of these evaluation tools.

Pre and Post-Questionnaires

Each participant will complete both a pre and a post-questionnaire. The identity of the participants will be kept confidential in that the questionnaires will be number coded so that post-questionnaires can be matched with the pre-questionnaires for evaluation. The first section of the pre-questionnaire contains questions relating to the background of each participant focusing on these themes: (1) their life history, (2) their current living situation, and (3) recent injustices committed against them, their family, and neighbors. The remainder of the first questionnaire, also embedded in the second questionnaire, contains questions focusing on the participants' beliefs in God, religion, Christianity, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

The post-questionnaire will contain a separate section designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the seminar. Did the seminar help the participant to better understand the dynamics of forgiveness and reconciliation? Did the seminar present a clear biblical model for understanding forgiveness and reconciliation which can be applied in their circumstances? Did the seminar move the participant in a positive way in their understanding of these subjects? These are the sorts of questions the "seminar evaluation" will ask in hopes of getting a clear picture of the overall potential of the seminar.

Daily Small Group Sessions

All of the participants of the seminar will be divided into small groups and assigned a group leader who will be a staff member at the Life Center. Every day following the presentation of the teaching material each group leader will guide his or her group in a one hour session reflecting on the teaching material. A prearranged set of direct and open-ended questions will serve as a guide for the group leaders as they meet with their small groups. These questions will flow out of the context of the teaching material which was presented to them earlier in the day. I will meet with the group leaders to discuss and prepare for each day's small group. We will also discuss problems which arise from previous small group sessions. During this time I will provide each group leader with appropriate lead-in questions dealing with the material taught earlier in the teaching session to be introduced to the group for discussion by the group leader. During the small group meeting of the group leader and the seminar participants, the group leader will note emerging themes and responses to these questions for later evaluation. All of the information, input, and insight into the dynamics of the seminar and the small groups will be noted by myself and the group leaders during our daily meetings with the purpose of providing an evaluation of the seminar after it has concluded. This information will be discussed in two final meetings of the leaders of the seminar in concluding group leader sessions.

Concluding Group Leader Sessions

Insights and observations noted during the daily small group evaluation sessions will be the focus of two concluding group leader sessions. The first of these two sessions will be held immediately following the seminar with the second being scheduled two weeks after the conclusion of the seminar. During these evaluation sessions discussion will center on needed revisions, changes, and

adaptations in regard to the questionnaires, the teaching material and the daily participant group sessions. Appropriate changes and revisions will be suggested with the hopes of making succeeding seminars more effective. These changes and revisions will be made prior to it being offered to the Baptist Unions for their use.

It is my hope that the evaluation of the project will show that being forgiven by God and grasping the biblical concept of God's unconditional love toward humanity as illustrated at the cross will help war victims to see the need to offer forgiveness to their perpetrators both individually and corporately. This basic premise which runs contrary to the cultural and historical way in which Balkans generally deal with acts of aggression committed against them, is the heart of the good news of the gospel.

Chapter 2

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF FORGIVENESS AS A FOUNDATION FOR RECONCILIATION

Forgiveness and reconciliation are biblical themes which have been researched in a variety of ways by a host of scholars in many different fields of study. This chapter will not be a regurgitation of this material. It is hoped that the uniqueness of this study will be appreciated in the way it looks at forgiveness as the foundation or basis for reconciliation. In this way forgiveness, when properly understood, seeks peace and reconciliation whenever possible between alienated parties. The purpose of this chapter is to discover a biblical model for forgiveness which seeks reconciliation between estranged parties and in the process provides peace and restoration to those who pursue reconciliation.

A Biblical Understanding of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

A biblical study of forgiveness and reconciliation should begin with an examination of sin from both theological and sociological perspectives with a particular emphasis on the effects of sin in the world. While it would not be practical to try to examine these subjects in an inclusive way tracing evil throughout the Old and New Testaments, it might be more helpful to examine one man's sin against God and his subsequent attempt to find forgiveness and reconciliation with God. More than any other psalm in the Old Testament, Psalm 51 portrays a man, broken by his sin, who sincerely desires to see his relationship with God restored. This psalm, sometimes referred to as a contrite sinner's prayer for pardon, touchingly reveals the sorrow-filled heart of a man who desires

reconciliation with his God. Marvin Tate says that in this psalm “there is a full confession of sin which is without parallel in any other biblical psalm.”¹ By blending this psalm together with the biblical account of King David’s sin against Uriah and Bathsheba as recorded in Second Samuel chapters eleven through twelve, we can add to Psalm 51 some background information which can help us to understand David’s state of mind when this psalm was written.

II Samuel, chapter eleven describes the “sin” of David. He saw Bathsheba from his roof as she was bathing. Verse four says that he “took her,” “she came to him,” and that “he lay with her.” Hearing that she was pregnant, he began an elaborate plot to emend his sin. Uriah was called from the front lines to return to Jerusalem. After David’s foiled attempts to reunite Uriah with Bathsheba, David determined that it was necessary to murder Uriah. Joab was enlisted in a plot to see Uriah placed on the front lines of a fierce battle where he would surely die. The good news of this successful plan was brought to David. Uriah was dead. David took Bathsheba to be his wife.

Chapter twelve introduces the prophet Nathan into the story. Nathan approaches David with a sad story of injustice and greed committed by a wealthy and selfish man against the poor and pitiful owner of a ewe lamb. After hearing how the rich man took the only ewe lamb from the poor man, David felt in his heart that the rich man must surely die. Since the death penalty was contrary to the law of Moses as punishment for this crime, David demanded that full restitution must be made to the poor man according to the Law.² At this moment, David’s sin against Uriah and Bathsheba is uncovered, judgment is pronounced against him by Nathan, and the chapter ends with judgment coming upon David’s

¹Marvin E. Tate, “Psalms 51-100,” in *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 20 (Dallas: Word Publisher, 1990), p. 8.

²Ben F. Philbeck, “1 - 2 Samuel,” in *1 Samuel - Nehemiah, The Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 3 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), p. 112.

house. Commenting on David's actions, McKane says that at this moment "David apprehends the enormity of his failure . . . which paves the way for Nathan's assurance of forgiveness."³ The narrative describes how David's sin resulted in the death of Uriah, the disgrace of Bathsheba, judgment upon his household (as described in II Sam. 12:11) and the death of his unborn son. Brueggemann in his commentary points out that "the three commandments David violated are the prohibitions on killing, adultery, and coveting."⁴ By breaking these commandments, David sinned against God. His sin with Bathsheba "was but the outward expression of his inward resistance to God's leadership."⁵ From this story, Caird says, it is clear that "sin has two results: it separates a man from God, and it produces evil effects in the world."⁶ The story does not reveal how or if David makes restitution to those against whom his sin had the direst effects, but it does display the broken and contrite heart of the man who sinned. This is the focus of Psalm 51. In this psalm, David asks God for forgiveness for his sins which he committed against God. How can this psalm shed light on the topic of forgiveness and reconciliation? This should be revealed after a careful consideration of the intent of this psalm.

David makes repeated reference to his sin in Psalm 51. Marvin Tate says that in this psalm, various significant words and phrases are used to describe David's sin.⁷ He refers to his sins as "transgressions" (vv. 1, 3), as "iniquities" (vv. 2, 5, 9), as "evil" (v. 4), as "bloodguiltiness" (v. 14), and as "sin"

³William McKane, *I & II Samuel* (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 237.

⁴Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel, Interpretation*, vol. 9 (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), p. 281.

⁵Philbeck, *1 Samuel - Nehemiah*, p. 110.

⁶George B. Caird, "2 Samuel," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 2 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 1104.

⁷Tate, *Psalms*, p. 32.

(vv. 2, 4, 5, 9). David describes his sins as if they were a barrier between himself and God. He feels rejected by God and alienated from His presence. David at this point describes himself as a man so tainted and disfigured by sin that it permeates his entire being. The culmination of his feelings is recorded in verse five. He says: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me” (Ps. 51:5).

In this psalm, Marvin Tate says that there are three verbs expressing vigorous action in the petitions for forgiveness. They are “to blot out, to wash thoroughly, and to cleanse.” The first verb, Tate says, is used in the sense of “wipe off” or “obliterate” a name, a remembrance, or a written curse. The second verb used in the petitions for forgiveness seems to be derived from the domestic practice of washing clothes, and the third verb is used for a physical cleansing: dross from metal, clouds from the heaven; from disease; unclean things from the temple.⁸ The three verbs for forgiveness are matched by three primary words for sin. They are “rebelling,” “bending or twisting” and “missing the mark.” Even in the absence of the English translation of the word “forgive” in this psalm, these word pictures and verb forms indicate that the desire for forgiveness is at the heart of Psalm 51.

Tate adds further insight into the meaning of forgiveness in this psalm by tracing the phrases to be “un-sinned with hyssop,” to be “whiter than snow,” and to the “hiding of the divine face.” The first metaphor describes David’s desire to be “un-sinned” or clean from sin. The second metaphor describes the result of such a cleansing: to be white as snow or to be completely clean and prepared for an encounter with the divine presence. The last metaphor describes the forgiving action of God. Tate says that this metaphor describes God separating himself in a

⁸Ibid., p. 15.

gracious self-alienation from the suppliant's sins which is a startling concept for forgiveness.⁹

David's sin was committed against God but the effects of his sin were felt by a host of innocent people. He sinned not only against God, but against Uriah, Bathsheba, and their families. He sinned against Joab by involving him in his cover-up plot. His sin affected the army of Israel and the nation as a whole. David's sin against God had grotesque effects on the people of Israel because it was their king who committed such a sin. David's abuse of his kingly power was a sin which was committed at the highest level of society. The king had taken advantage of the very people who trusted him and looked to him for guidance. With Nathan's help David confronted himself, recognized his sin, and was so moved to contrition that he openly confessed his sin toward God and pleaded for God's mercy to forgive his sin.

The Need for Forgiveness

There is a great need in David's life for forgiveness, as is clearly expressed in Psalm 51. Sin had a significant influence on David. Not only has his sin affected many innocent people, but it alienated him from God and left a stain upon his soul. In this psalm, David describes sin in a way which leads us to believe that it left a significant mark not only on David, but on all of creation. From Psalm 51, it is apparent that sin has brought into the world a fundamental depravity which affects all of God's creation. David has accurately and vividly described his individual participation in sin, leaving the impression that no one is without guilt but that all are involved in sin and as Paul will later say, "fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). From David's description of sin it should be apparent that sin permeates all areas of life, that everyone is an active participant

⁹Ibid., p. 21.

in sin, and that sin reaches the highest levels of society to the degree that even the king sins. In this story it can be assumed that sin reaches into both the social and political arenas of life and that sin has a “corporate” dimension to it which encapsulates humankind, making all people slaves to sin as individuals and in social institutions.

The first eleven chapters of Genesis give a panoramic picture of the sinful nature of humanity. Addressing this, Brueggemann says that

the creature is stridently disobedient, proud, and alienated. That is clear of the first man and woman (3:1-7), of Cain (4:1-16), of the world in the flood narrative (6:5-13), and of the nations in the tower narrative (11:1-9).¹⁰

These four narratives build upon each other showing how the effects of sin spread throughout society. Sin has no respect or regard for individuals. As these four narratives indicate, sin escalates as more and more people participate in sinful actions. A cursory overview of these narratives can give a better understanding of the fundamental depravity of sin, the active individual participation of all people in sin, and the social, political, and corporate dimension of sin.

Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God. The outward sign of their rebellion was their disobeying him to follow their own desires. God forwarned them of the penalty of their rebellion. They were expelled from the garden and were alienated from God.¹¹

In addressing the Cain and Abel story, Westermann sees sin manifested in the brotherly hatred of Cain for Abel as an “intensification of the nature of sin which was first seen in the Adam and Eve story.”¹² Cain has killed his brother.

¹⁰Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1946), p. 19.

¹¹Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion S. J. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), p. 257.

¹²Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 318.

Sin is spreading throughout the world and is manifested in various ways. Cain is sent into exile fearing for his life.

The flood narrative in Genesis describes a world which has been infiltrated by sin to the degree that it permeates the entire creation. This is not a story of localized sin, but of a world wide epidemic of evil. This third narrative shows the results of sin which began in the garden as an expression of a rebellious attitude toward God. Abel's murder becomes insignificant when compared to this description of the state of sinfulness in which the world is found. In describing the condition of the world, Brueggemann says that "creation has not changed [but] it is deeply set against God's purpose."¹³

A fourth narrative story found in Genesis, chapter eleven, describes humanity's attempts to build a tower to reach the heavens. In this narrative, one is left to imagine the devastating effects of sin when social and political leaders are united together with one purpose to "reach the heavens" to "establish a name." This is not a story of mere rebellion against God, nor murder between brothers. This is not even the picture of a world overcome by the effects of sin. This narrative suggests the possibility of a premeditated and concerted effort on the part of society's leaders to promote their own selfish and idolatrous ideologies. In this narrative, one can see on the horizon the coming of society's worst nightmares. Reflections of war, genocide, and "ethnic cleansing" consume this image, predicting assaults upon society which can only be possible when sanctioned and undertaken by greedy and vile governments. This narrative foreshadows the tale of destruction which social and political leaders will cast on society. Bowie sees this as a picture of the basic sinfulness of humanity when human beings by their own devices think "they could reach the pinnacle of

¹³Brueggemann, *Genesis*, p. 80.

coveted importance and sit triumphantly on top of their world.”¹⁴ Westermann calls this the “threat posed by the unity of humankind which can lead to dehumanization.”¹⁵

Taken together, these four biblical stories describe a rebellious people who continually follow after their own desires, neglecting to obey God and His commandments. In these narratives we see the fundamental depravity of sin which enters every area of life wreaking havoc among the peoples of the world. We witness the individual participation of humanity in sin and rebellion against God. We see how sin invades even the political structures, causing nations to build together their towers of disobedience to God’s commands. Throughout these narratives it is clear that sin has no boundaries.

David understood the effects of his individual participation in sin and its resulting effects on his relationship with God. He knew that his sin engulfed his household reaching far into his future, eventually resulting in Absalom’s death after a failed *coup* upon his father’s kingdom. David understood sin and evil remembering from his boyhood days the giant named Goliath who sought to oppress his family and nation by brute force. David understood the sin of a king as he reflected upon his relationship with Bathsheba. Surely he was affected by the way this sinful relationship mocked righteousness and displayed the wanton abuse of kingly power.

In Psalm 51, one can see reflections of the sin of one man which finds its roots in the Genesis narratives. David’s image of sin was so graphic that one could say that the “roots” of his sinfulness were deeply entangled in his soul from the moment of his conception. By saying that “in sin his mother conceived him”

¹⁴Walter Russell Bowie, “Genesis,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 1 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), p. 563.

¹⁵Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 556.

(Ps. 51:7), David is not referring to the possibility that his conception was the result of his mother's adulterous relationship.¹⁶ He was probably trying to find a meaningful expression for the sorrow he felt in his soul, which was a result of his sin against God. His self-condemnation was epitomized in this expression. This same propensity to sin has spread its roots deep within the very rubric of society. Today it is common to mourn the birth of babies conceived in sin. "Crack babies" and babies born with "fetal alcohol syndrome" are present day expressions of the result of sin. Could David have imagined how sin would take hold of societies like a spreading cancer, infecting humanity at all levels?

The immediate response of God toward sin is judgment against the people. But that judgment, as was displayed in the Genesis narratives, is quickly overshadowed by God's mercy as He extends to sinful humanity an opportunity to prosper in spite of their sinful nature. Alienation from God becomes the punishment for Adam and Eve but as Brueggemann says, they live and God's grace is made evident in that "the one who tests is the one who finally provides."¹⁷ Cain is sent into exile and fearing for his life pleads for mercy from God and receives his "mark."¹⁸ God pronounces judgment on the world but at the same time, he provides mercy. The rainbow becomes the sign of the covenant between God and Noah. God dispersed the people of Babel for their own benefit so that their continued attempts to reach the heavens would not result in a more devastating judgment upon the people. In this way, God's mercy is understood as the basis for God's forgiveness.

¹⁶ Tate, *Psalms*, p. 19.

¹⁷ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, p. 49.

¹⁸ Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967), p. 76.

Mercy: The Basis for Forgiveness

Returning to Psalm 51, it should be clear why David relied on God's mercy as the basis of his forgiveness. Having a good understanding of a God who provides forgiveness and mercy to his people, David recognizes his sin against God and pleads for his mercy. Durham says that Psalm 51 begins with a plea for mercy and the forgiveness of God. He goes on to say that it is

the only proper posture left to the sinner, whose fall is inevitably the result of the variableness of his own loyalty to God but who can ever depend upon the utter consistency of God's attitude towards him. Thus the prayer is for a mercy which is in accord with God's unchanging love and for an erasure of sins in accord with God's "multiplied tenderness."¹⁹

David sensed his alienation from God. He had taken advantage of his power as king. Brueggemann says that he had no "restraint, no second thoughts, no reservations, no justifications. He [took] simply because he [could]. He [was] at the culmination of his enormous power."²⁰ Nathan the prophet was used by God to help David see his sin. Upon realizing his sin, he calls out for mercy and forgiveness. David recognizes his alienation from God and confesses his sin. Marvin Tate says that this psalm is divided into two parts. The first he calls "confession," and the second he calls "restoration." Tate points out that confession has two fundamental aspects. He says first confession "must be directed to God, accepting the rightness of his judgment and his power to cleanse and forgive" and that secondly, "confession places on the sinner the necessity, often painful, of honest confrontation with his or her own sin."²¹

Tate says that restoration follows confession. He says that the sinner

¹⁹John I. Durham, "Psalms," in *Esther-Psalms, The Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), p. 275.

²⁰Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, p. 274.

²¹Tate, *Psalms*, p. 32.

cannot be self-restored but that a divine work of re-creation and endowment is essential. He goes on to say that forgiveness “involves a creative work . . . and is not a creative work in the sense of creation-out-of-nothing, but a creative work in the sense of bringing order and peace where chaos and hopeless turbulence were before.”²²

Sin leads to alienation between God and humanity as seen in the four narratives in Genesis one through eleven. The devastating results of sin permeate all of God’s creation necessitating the restoration of relationships. Psalm 51 describes David’s desire to be reconciled to God. God provides mercy to David and he is restored to fellowship with God, thus illustrating how mercy is the basis for God’s forgiveness. The result of David’s restoration with God was *shalom*. *Shalom* is the goal of forgiveness.

Shalom: The Goal of Forgiveness

If sin produces alienation between God and sinful humanity, and if God’s mercy provides the basis of forgiveness, then the goal of forgiveness must be peace characterized by the restoration or reconciliation of humanity with God. David’s sin alienated him from God and he desired that their relationship be restored. Marvin Tate says that the “joyful awareness of God’s saving presence had been lost and was lacking from the relationship disrupted by sin.”²³ David’s prayer was that the cleansing of his sin would result in a “renewal” of a steadfast spirit within him (Ps. 51:10) and that this renewal would “restore” to him the joy of his salvation (Ps. 51:12).

David wanted *shalom*. White says that “the earliest and most

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 24.

comprehensive understanding of *shalom* was that of ‘Totality’ in the sense of ‘wholeness’ and ‘well-being.’”²⁴ Harkness says that *shalom* is “both an ingredient and a fruit of reconciliation . . . and that the term is used for peace within the soul, between individuals, and among nations.”²⁵ David knew that his relationship with God would never be restored until he confessed his sin and sought reconciliation from God. The basis of this restoration was God’s mercy and the goal of restoration was *shalom* with God.

Forgiveness leads to reconciliation and the goal of reconciliation is peace between estranged parties. Prior to an investigation of reconciliation as it is understood in the New Testament, it may be helpful to understand Old and New Testament usages of the word forgiveness. Emerson says that the

basic Old Testament word that is translated “forgiveness” is *shalach* . . . [In] the Old Testament, forgiveness does not mean denial of the past. Rather, it comes to mean removal of the effect of the past upon the present. Hence, forgiveness is spoken of as the “Divine restoration of an offender into favor.”²⁶

He further says that “the dynamic of forgiveness appears to be that of releasing one from bondage to a past act.”²⁷ The word *apheimi* is used in the Septuagint to translate *shalach*, the word used most often to indicate forgiveness, and it has the idea of sending away or remitting. Bultmann says that the usage of the word for forgive (*aphienai*) in the Septuagint denotes either “release, surrender, leave, or leave in peace” and that the “object” of remission is sin or

²⁴Hugh C. White, *Shalom in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1973), p. 24.

²⁵Georgia Harkness, *The Ministry of Reconciliation* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 10.

²⁶James G. Emerson, *The Dynamics of Forgiveness* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 82.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 83.

guilt, mostly *amartia*.²⁸ The Greek usage is basically the same, meaning to “release someone from a legal relation, whether office, marriage, obligation, or debt”²⁹ In the New Testament, forgiveness denoted by *apheinai* and *pareisis* is almost always that of God. Bultmann says “to this extent, the concept is the same as the OT and Jewish idea of forgiveness.”³⁰ Drawing from both the Old and New Testament meanings of “forgiveness,” Bultman concludes the following:

This makes it plain a. that the OT conception of God as the Judge to whom man is responsible is maintained; b. that God’s forgiveness is not deduced from an idea of God or His grace, but is experienced as His act in the event of salvation . . . ; c. that forgiveness as an eschatological event renews the whole man, in whom sin was not just something isolated and occasional but the power which determined the whole being; d. that forgiveness can be received only when man affirms God’s judgment on himself, the old man, in the confession of sins and penitence . . . and that there is thus avoided the legal understanding of the thought of forgiveness as a remission of punishment related only to past events; the future is included in eschatological forgiveness.³¹

A synthesis of the material which has thus far been covered in Genesis, II Samuel, and Psalm 51 can provide us with a biblical definition of forgiveness. God’s act of forgiveness is the merciful removal of any sin which stands as a barrier to fellowship with God. This merciful act follows on the heels of the Christian’s obvious contrition for sins and without contrition, reconciliation with God is not possible. It should be noted that forgiveness can not be equated with reconciliation in that it does not guarantee that reconciliation will result between estranged parties. This will become more evident as forgiveness and reconciliation are examined in light of New Testament teachings on the subject.

²⁸Rudolph Bultmann, “*Amartia*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 511.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 509.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 511.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 512.

In the New Testament it becomes clear that reconciliation is the goal of God's grace and mercy which are inherent in forgiveness. It was through the death of Jesus on the cross at Calvary that God sought to reunite an alienated and sinful humanity with Himself. One must understand what it means to be reconciled in Christ in order to comprehend how forgiveness leads to restored relationships.

Reconciliation: The Results of Forgiveness Received

Lost humanity longs for restoration with God as a result of humanity's sinfulness. The process of forgiveness and reconciliation represent two sides of the same coin. Without both sides of the coin, restoration and peace are not possible between sinful humanity and a just God. Stendhal, trying to simplify theological phraseology in search of the meaning of forgiveness says:

Justification, redemption, salvation, reconciliation, propitiation-these are words which are somehow too theologically loaded, even though some insist on them as a badge of orthodoxy. When it really comes down to it, quite frankly, it all amounts to forgiveness.³²

Stendhal has oversimplified forgiveness a bit by calling it the sum of justification, redemption, salvation, reconciliation, and propitiation; but in so doing, he has broken through some of the theological rhetoric which for many, creates confusion in understanding the term "forgiveness." In the case of David, peace and restoration with God was the simple request of a man whose sins had caused him to be alienated from God. Margaret Thrall says that the basic "meaning of reconciliation is the bringing of hostility to an end and the making of peace between the originally estranged parties."³³ Taylor, after an examination of

³²Kristen Stendhal, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 24.

³³Margaret E. Thrall, "Salvation Proclaimed: Reconciliation with God (II Corinthians 5:18-21)," *Expository Times*, 93 (October 1981 - September 1982), 228.

the word “peace” in relationship with reconciliation says: “Reconciliation is not only restoration to fellowship with God, but is also, and at the same time, the gift of His peace.”³⁴ In this image of reconciliation, one can see the richness of the term “atonement.” Elliot says: “Letting down a bridge (reconciliation) is the means whereby man achieves ‘at-one-ment’ with God, his brother and his world.”³⁵ In his summary of the word atonement, Taylor says that atonement “is the work of God in restoring sinful men to fellowship with Himself and in establishing His Kingdom; it is the reconciliation of men and of the world to God.”³⁶ Harkness says that

atonement in the fullest New Testament sense is reconciliation, the removal of barriers between man and God which man by his sin and indifference to the divine demands has brought upon himself. In short, it is not God, but man, who needs to be reconciled.³⁷

To summarize, using the illustration of David, sin became a barrier between him and God. Prior to his relationship with God being restored, he needed to recognize his sin, to express sorrow and contrition for that sin, and to be willing to repent, or turn from his sin. At the same time, restoration depended on God’s willingness to offer David forgiveness for his sins, which “removed,” “cleansed,” or “blotted out” his sins. At the moment when contrition and forgiveness responded to each other in a blending of mercy and grace, restoration or reconciliation took place. In this way, reconciliation becomes the results of forgiveness which is received. Emerson calls this completed process “realized forgiveness.” He defines this “as the awareness of forgiveness to such a degree

³⁴Vincent Taylor, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: A Study in New Testament Theology* (London: MacMillian and Company, 1941), p. 107.

³⁵Ralph H. Elliot, *Reconciliation and the New Age* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1973), p. 13.

³⁶Taylor, *Forgiveness*, p. 231.

³⁷Harkness, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, p. 21.

that a person is free from the guilt he feels.”³⁸ He goes on to say that in “Pauline terms, ‘realized forgiveness’ is the freedom to be a new creature and a new creator.”³⁹

Reconciliation is used in one form or another in Matthew, Romans, I and II Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews. Nowhere is it used more than by the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians. In II Corinthians 5:18-21, he introduces the concept of reconciliation as the driving power of God transforming those “in Christ” into “new creatures” (2 Corinthians 5:17). In the concluding verses of chapter five, Paul uses a variation of the word “reconcile” five times. He says that:

- (1) Christians have been reconciled to God through Christ;
- (2) Christians have received the ministry of reconciliation to proclaim to others;
- (3) God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself;
- (4) God has committed to Christians the word of reconciliation;
- (5) Christians are to compel the lost world to be reconciled to God

Victor Furnish says: “God’s act of justification in Christ has to do with the restoration of man to a proper relationship with God and overcoming the estrangement and hostility between them is also indicated when Paul employs the concept of *reconciliation*.”⁴⁰ It should be remembered that (1) humanity is in need of forgiveness from God because of the innate depravity of sin, (2) mercy is the basis for forgiveness, (3) peace is the goal of forgiveness, and (4) that reconciliation is the result of forgiveness received. It is this fourth point which needs to be stressed at this time.

Because of sin, all of humanity is in need of restoration or reconciliation

³⁸Emerson, *The Dynamics of Forgiveness*, p. 21.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 148.

with God. This places emphasis on the need of reconciliation between God and humanity, God and creation, and between human beings. Reconciliation involves both individuals and corporate entities. This includes reconciliation between political parties, nations, and ethnic groups. Donald Shriver, in his recent book *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics*, develops the thesis that forgiveness at a national level, expressed toward those who at one time were oppressed by governments, is not only possible but is necessary to heal deep wounds of resentment. In his introduction he makes reference to the Serbian people. He says:

The world cringes at a Serb's willingness to kill a Muslim in revenge for ancestors who fought the Battle of Kosovo in the year 1389; but in fact every nation has among its citizens those who have vast unresolved resentments against the descendants of some other group of citizens. The majority of us are apparently a long way from ceasing to hold the sins of the ancestors against their living children. Were the ancestors still living, we might be willing to refight our wars with them.⁴¹

Reconciliation between estranged nations is difficult to achieve and involves the restoration of relationships at the individual level as well as the social and political levels. Reconciliation, Turner says, is inclusive to the point that it “involves individual, corporate, cosmic, and eschatological dimensions which make it extremely challenging theologically.”⁴² Ferguson says that reconciliation “is not just reconciliation of the human community to God. It is the establishment, or restoration of harmonious relationships at all levels of creation.”⁴³ Concerning reconciliation between God and the world, Turner says:

⁴¹Donald W. Shriver, Jr., *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 3.

⁴²David L. Turner, “Paul and the Ministry of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:11 - 6:2,” *Criswell Theological Review* (Fall 1989), 77.

⁴³John Ferguson, “Reconciliation,” *The Expositor Times*, 93 (October 1984 - September 1985), 308.

The effects of the second Adam's obedience can be no less than the effects of the first Adam's disobedience. As Adam's disobedience wreaked havoc throughout the entire created order, so Christ's obedience will ultimately harmonize the universe in the new heavens and new earth. The entire *kosmos* will ultimately be at peace with God due to Christ's redemptive mediacy.⁴⁴

Addressing the importance of the relationship of individuals with one another, Turner says that the "experience of reconciliation through Christ radically redefines vertical and horizontal human relationships as there is now peace between mankind and God and peace between Jew and Gentile."⁴⁵

John Polhill gives an excellent overview of reconciliation:

First, the idea of reconciliation involves alienation Between God and humanity, it is human sin which has created the barrier Second, for reconciliation to take place, one of the involved parties must take the initiative in restoring the relationship. Always, for Paul, God is shown to be the one who acts to bring about the reconciliation Third, Christ is the *agent* of reconciliation. . . . On the cross the entire load of human sin weighed upon his shoulders. He died 'in place of us.' Fourth, . . . those who are reconciled to God become a *reconciled humanity*. . . . where the old barriers of relationship no longer exist . . . [and a] final element of reconciliation is that those reconciled to God become themselves "*ministers of reconciliation*."⁴⁶

"Reconciliation," says Reid, "is a hard thing to achieve. It involves the unveiling of our need of God, the breaking of our pride, the creation in us of the penitence that seeks forgiveness and of the willingness to surrender to God's will."⁴⁷ This is what happened when David humbled himself to the point of self debasement and sought God's forgiving mercy for the cleansing of his sins and the restoration of his relationship with God. This was Paul's goal as he sought reconciliation between himself and certain Christians in Corinth who challenged

⁴⁴Turner, "Paul and the Ministry of Reconciliation," p. 85.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 91.

⁴⁶John B. Polhill, "Reconciliation at Corinth," *Review and Expositor*, 86 (Winter 1989), 352.

⁴⁷James Reid, "The Second Epistle to the Corinthians," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 10 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 342.

his apostolic authority. It was also his desire to see the body of Christ in Corinth united together under the Lordship of Christ.⁴⁸ This was Paul's desire when he spoke of the restoration of the Jews to God (Rom. 9-11). This is the goal of the gospel as it spreads into the world seeking to save the lost and restore lost humanity to God (John 3:16-17). Sin reveals the need for a Savior. Sorrow and contrition lead toward forgiveness. Forgiveness leads toward reconciliation. Reconciliation seeks to re-unite divided parties. This is good news.

What are some practical applications of forgiveness and reconciliation which can be gleaned from this study? Where can one find a model or models for forgiveness applicable to the Christian today? What must individuals do to initiate reconciliation in the inner circles of life where conflict and alienation take place on a regular basis? The teachings of Jesus offer a radical redefinition of forgiveness and reconciliation that differ from traditional Jewish thinking. Paul's development of reconciliation in II Corinthians 5:18-21 is developed on Jesus' teaching and His death on the cross. These teachings of Jesus are the "how to" of Paul's plea that Christians be ". . . kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven [you]" (Eph. 4:32). Of the key parables of Jesus dealing with forgiveness, space will only allow us to consider two recorded in Matthew 18: 21-35 and in Luke 7:36-50. The former will give insight into an understanding of the dynamics of forgiving others while the latter will illustrate the dynamic effect love has upon forgiveness.

Matthew 18:21-35

In Matthew 18:21-35 Peter asks Jesus how often he should forgive his brother if he sins against him. He follows this question immediately with his

⁴⁸See Floyd V. Filson, "The Second Epistle to the Corinthians," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 10 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), pp. 342-344, and Turner, "Paul and the Ministry of Reconciliation," pp. 77-95.

answer of “up to seven times?” Jesus answers Peter’s question by saying that forgiveness should be offered seven times seventy times. He then follows up with the parable of the kingdom of heaven being compared to a king who settled accounts with his slaves. The narrative describes the king who brings before him those who were indebted to him. One slave who owed an impossible sum of over \$10,000,000 in today’s currency, knowing that he could not repay such a sum, fell down at the feet of the king and begged for patience until the debt be repaid. The king felt compassion for the slave and “released him and forgave him the debt” (v. 27). The slave went out forgiven by the king with the remission of his debt in hand. Immediately upon finding one of his debtors, he seized him and demanded instant payment of a pitiful sum of money which the slave could not repay. At this moment the forgiven slave was transposed into the position of the forgiving king but with different results. This forgiven slave threw his debtor into prison until complete restitution was made for his debt. Upon hearing this news, the forgiving king called for the return of this forgiven slave and after disclosing the folly of his sin, handed him over to be punished because of his unwillingness to offer forgiveness to others as he had himself received.

In this parable, Jesus provides us with a new paradigm for looking at forgiveness. He at first startles Peter with his reply to his question. Eduard Schweizer, in his commentary on Matthew says that

Peter has learned in the school of Jesus that forgiveness must take the place of vengeance; but he is still asking about limits, and has therefore departed only quantitatively, not qualitatively, from the Jewish principle that a man may be forgiven once, twice, or thrice, but not four times. . . . Peter is still counting, but at least up to seven. Jesus’ answer, however, abolishes all limits, whether it is translated “seventy times seven” or “seventy-seven times.”⁴⁹

⁴⁹Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, trans. David E. Green (London: S. P. C. K., 1975), p. 377.

Martin Luther King, Jr., says that this “strange doctrine awakened the questioning mind of Peter.”⁵⁰ Commenting on this text, King says

Peter wanted to be legal and statistical. But Jesus responded by affirming that there is no limit to forgiveness. “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” In other words, forgiveness is not a matter of quantity, but of quality. A man cannot forgive up to four hundred and ninety times without forgiveness becoming a part of the habit structure of his being. Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude.⁵¹

In this parable the forgiven refuses to become the forgiver. This frustrates the cycle of forgiveness which the king expects. This is unacceptable to the forgiving king and his reaction must be taken seriously. Forgiveness requires a multiplication effect. Forgiveness must be received and in like fashion offered to another. In this parable, Buttrick says that there “is no escape from the story’s insistence that God’s forgiveness and man’s are linked.”⁵² Johnson says that he “who forgives is dealt with on the basis of mercy, but he who fails to forgive has no right to expect anything more than strict judgment on his own sins. . . .”⁵³ In this parable, Jesus ties together the necessity of one acknowledging and receiving the forgiveness of God as a prerequisite for one having a heart which is capable of forgiving others. Thus, Emerson says, forgiveness becomes “a requirement both for oneself and for others because that is the only way that true relationships can take place.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, it is in the context of the forgiveness of God that we are expected to have forgiving attitudes toward other people.⁵⁵ Taylor

⁵⁰Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), p. 40.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²George A. Buttrick, “The Gospel According to St. Matthew,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 7 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), p. 478.

⁵³Sherman E. Johnson, “The Gospel according to St. Matthew,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 7 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), p. 476.

⁵⁴Emerson, *The Dynamics of Forgiveness*, p. 22.

⁵⁵Ibid.

summarizes this parable in his book by saying that “the condition of forgiveness is not only repentance, but also the presence of the forgiving spirit in relation to the offenses of others.”⁵⁶ Jesus, through this parable, draws humanity into the cycle of God’s forgiveness, making the forgiveness offered to sinners directly related to the willingness of sinners to forgive those who have sinned against them.

Jesus not only taught the necessity of being willing to forgive but displayed it in his death. Using the illustration of the Scottish clan feuds, Buttrick says that they persisted from generation to generation “until someone was willing to break the vicious cycle. Jesus on his cross prayed that his enemies might be forgiven, and forgave them while they were still intent on his death.”⁵⁷ It was in his life that Jesus taught the need to extend the forgiveness one receives to others and it was in his death that he gave the example of breaking the cycle of hatred and unforgiveness. In this way, Jesus has depicted a cycle of forgiveness and reconciliation which, when put into practice both individually and corporately, can break or interrupt the natural progression of hatred, revenge, and retaliation. This cycle is:

- (1) Forgiveness is granted by God based on his love for his creation;
- (2) Forgiveness is received into the heart of a penitent sinner;
- (3) Reconciliation takes place between the sinner and God;
- (4) This prompts forgiveness being offered to debtors by forgiven sinners;
- (5) Forgiveness is received from one sinner by another; and
- (6) The result is an epidemic of forgiveness and reconciliation between individuals.

As was noted by Buttrick, the clan feuds ceased when the cycle was broken. It is possible to break the cycle but it is easier to maintain the *status quo*. Breaking the cycle requires from all sides a recognition of the events which precipitated the ongoing hatred and a real desire to see the cycle broken. This

⁵⁶Taylor, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, p. 17.

⁵⁷Buttrick, “The Gospel According to St. Matthew,” p. 478.

recognition is followed by the sincere attempts of all parties to lay aside past grievances and to forgive others for their participation in such events. Only when peace is seen as the preferred option over continued fighting, will the cycle be broken resulting in an outbreak of peace.

What is the power which drives this cycle of forgiveness and reconciliation? It will become evident in the examination of the parable of forgiveness found in Luke 7:36-50 that love is the driving force behind this cycle.

Luke 7:36-50

Luke tells the story of Jesus visiting the home of a Pharisee in 7:36. The story describes how a woman, a sinner, entered into the home of a Pharisee and wiped Jesus' feet with her tear drenched hair as he reclined at the table. Muttering to himself, the Pharisee doubts the authority of Jesus because he was permitting this to take place. Jesus, knowing the heart and intentions of the Pharisee, tells him the parable of the moneylender who had two debtors. One owed a great sum of money, the other a smaller amount. The moneylender forgave (remitted or erased from the books) the debts of these two debtors. Jesus asked Simon which of these two debtors loved the moneylender the greatest. Simon, the Pharisee, responded correctly to Jesus' question by saying that the one with the greatest debt had more love toward the moneylender. At this juncture, Jesus compares the two debtors with Simon and the "sinner woman." While the woman was showing her love and respect toward Jesus, Simon had been indifferent and to a degree hostile toward his guest. The comparison is then drawn that Simon, who regarding himself as a good person, has received little forgiveness for his sins and thus has little love toward the forgiver. On the other hand, the woman who was well known for her ability to sin received a greater forgiveness resulting in a greater love toward the forgiver. Fitzmyer says that the

“gracious cancellation of the debts, large and small, . . . drives home the point of the parable.”⁵⁸ This parable brings to surface the simple truth that where great and multiple sins are forgiven, the result is a greater love toward the forgiver. In verse 42, Luke says that “he forgave them both” but that the woman, with her great sins forgiven, loved the forgiver more than Simon. It is clear that forgiveness and love are closely related to each other in this parable.

Jesus redefines forgiveness and emphasizes the expression of love which the forgiven one has toward the forgiver. This reciprocated love is the sign of completed forgiveness. In his commentary, Knox says that “. . . this story as a whole is apparently intended to explain not why the woman is forgiven, but why she loves . . . and that penitence is itself an expression of love.”⁵⁹ Drawing conclusions from the story, he says that the “woman is both penitent and loving; and she is both because she has been and is being forgiven, even though the word of forgiveness has not yet been pronounced.”⁶⁰ In this parable Jesus links the forgiver and the forgiven with love. Love is being introduced in Luke’s Gospel as the motivating force of forgiveness which will ultimately be displayed on the cross. Taylor says that the cross provides the supreme incentive for the forgiveness of others and is the supreme revelation of the love of God and that where faith and love meet, reconciliation is effected, and man enters into fellowship with God.⁶¹ In his introduction, Taylor has already laid the ground-work for God’s love and forgiveness. He says:

⁵⁸Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX), The Anchor Bible* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1981), p. 689.

⁵⁹John Knox, “The Gospel According to St. Luke,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 8 (New York: Abingdon Press 1952), p. 142.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Taylor, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, pp. 237, 241, 249.

As the God of love, it will be His purpose to overcome the barriers raised by human sin, to put men right with Himself, to restore them to His fellowship, continually to enrich that fellowship, and to make possible their attainment of the highest ethical religious ends, as persons and as members of communities.⁶²

It is to this end that Christians must strive to proclaim God's reconciliation to the world. It is only the love of God which breaks the cycle of hatred, revenge, and retaliation. This cycle must be exchanged for the cycle of forgiveness and reconciliation motivated by love. This is the model for forgiveness and reconciliation which God presents to the world. He has offered this forgiveness and subsequent reconciliation to the world out of his mercy and expects us to model forgiveness in our relationships with others. In most situations this requires a total shift from one way of thinking to another. Ferguson notes that

In a system of oppression, where the primary violence lies in the oppressive structures, we may properly seek reconciliation between oppressors and oppressed, and a change of heart on the part of the oppressors. But that is not enough unless the system is changed. Reconciliation of that part of God's world to God demands such change before reconciliation is possible. That change may involve confrontation; confrontation may be a part of reconciliation.⁶³

As will be discovered in chapter three, the cycle of hate, revenge, and retaliation has for centuries been the model of dealing with conflict in the Balkans. The war in the former Yugoslavia presents many examples and illustrations of how the cycle of hatred will perpetuate itself until something better is offered as a replacement. How can Jesus' model of forgiveness and reconciliation be substituted for the existing model of conflict resolution in the former Yugoslavia? This will be the focus of Chapter three.

⁶²Ibid., p. xviii.

⁶³Ferguson, "Reconciliation," p. 309.

Chapter 3

RELEVANT HISTORICAL AND SOCIETAL ASPECTS OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION AS THEY RELATE TO VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS

Genesis chapters one through eleven describe four episodes of humanities rebellion against God and the resulting consequences of their rebellious attitude. In each of these four narratives it is interesting to note that after each rebellious act there was a shifting of people across both cultural and geographical boundaries. Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden. Cain was sent into exile. Noah and his family drifted in the Ark for a year until they finally came to rest on Mount Ararat. The people were dispersed from the city of Babel. This shifting and mixing of people groups, cultures, and religions can create opportunities for social growth and enhancement as a result of the blending of ethnic communities. It also creates the potential for ethnic clashes which can erupt into displays of intense hatred among different nationalities, often leading to one group attempting to “purify” a geographical area by driving out minority groups. This is what is commonly referred to as genocide, or “ethnic cleansing” which is perhaps the most heinous and destructive among society’s sins. J. L. Talon, professor of Modern General History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, points out that massacres, mass killings and bloodshed have been perpetrated throughout history with the purpose of producing homogeneous societies.¹ Europe has a long history of perpetuating genocide and ethnic cleansing. Andrew Bell-Fialkoff says that in Europe

¹J. L. Talon, *The Origins of the Holocaust: The Nazi Holocaust*, ed. Michael R. Marrus et al. (Westport, CT: Meckler Corporation, 1989), p. 185.

... massacre and expulsion were the most common methods of religious cleansing, which tended to target Jews, the only sizable minority in most countries. Jews were thus expelled from England (1290), France (1306), Hungary (1349-1360), Provence (1394 and 1490), Austria (1412), Lithuania (1445), Cracow (1494), Portugal (1497) and numerous German principalities at various times.²

Ethnic cleansing reached infamous proportions in modern times during the Second World War in Nazi Germany and in its occupied territory, making the Holocaust the epitome of ethnic cleansing at its worst. The Holocaust stands as an example of what can happen when political leaders purpose to cleanse their territory of those considered different in terms of their culture, religion, and history.

A History of Hatred in the Balkans

The Balkan peninsula is another example where mixed people groups, cultures, and religions have clashed. There is a long history of ethnic conflict in the Balkans resulting in numerous clashes, tribal conflicts, and area wars between ethnic groups. Duško Doder, a native of the former Yugoslavia, says:

The lands of the Yugoslavs have long been haunted by conflict. Ever since Emperor Constantine decided to split the Roman Empire in the fourth century A. D., the tectonic plates of imperial, religious, and racial interests have ground together in the Balkans.³

The Balkan peninsula is comprised of a mixture of ethnic groups and cultures. Greece and Romania claim roots in Ancient Greece and Rome. The Albanians have their roots embedded in Illyrian ancestry. The Slavic peoples of Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Hercegovina, Montenegro, and

²Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, "A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing," in *Foreign Affairs*, 72, no. 1 (Summer 1993), 112 - 113.

³Duško Doder, "Yugoslavia: New War, Old Hatreds," *Foreign Policy*, 91 (Summer 1993), 5.

Slovenia became established in the Balkans after migrating from Russia during the sixth through the eighth centuries.⁴

As a result of the missionary efforts of Cyril and Methodius in the late ninth century, Christianity gained a stronghold in the Balkans.⁵ This was a tumultuous time for the Church, eventually resulting in the schism of 1054 with the Balkans being divided into the Catholic West and the Orthodox East. Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina fell to the Roman West of the dividing line while Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro fell to Constantinople in the East.

During the Middle Ages, Orthodox Byzantine, Serbian, and Bulgarian empires became states of considerable power and prestige. At the same time, the dual monarchy of Austria and Hungary under the Habsburgs had considerable influence over the autonomous entities in Croatia, Bosnia, Hercegovina, and Slovenia. During these same years, Turkey was exerting her influence in the Balkan peninsula. In 1389, the Serbian ruler, Tsar Lazar was forced into a losing battle against the mighty Turkish army.⁶ On June 28, 1389, the Serbs lost the Battle of Kosovo which began 500-years of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. During this 500-year period of Muslim dominance, Serbia refused to accept its defeat. At every opportunity, the Serbian people rebelled against their Turkish oppressors. In 1804, Turkey began losing its grip on Serbia. Coordinated insurrections eventually led to the withdrawal of the Ottoman army from Serbia.⁷

The Habsburg armies, fighting their own battle with the Turks, finally

⁴ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 1.

⁵ Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970) p. 195.

⁶ Constantin Fotitch, *The War We Lost* (New York: Viking Press, 1948), p. 75.

⁷ *Ibid.*

succeeded in driving the Turks out of Central Europe at the end of the seventeenth century.⁸ During this period, the Habsburg army employed and settled Serbian soldiers along the border of Croatia and Bosnia to assist in keeping the Turks outside of the Habsburg territory. These re-settled areas where the Serbian people lived in Bosnia and Croatia would later erupt in ethnic violence in World War II and during the Yugoslavian war in 1991.⁹

Barbara Jelavich says that for the entire history of the Balkan peninsula “. . . perhaps the deepest mark was left by the five hundred years of Ottoman occupation.”¹⁰ The Ottoman rule brought together three very different cultural groups with Bosnia being in the center. Bosnia was a central stronghold of the Turkish Empire in the Balkans and it is in this area that the Orthodox, Catholics, and Muslims lived together for five hundred years. This five hundred year domination by the Muslims continued until eventually the Turks were defeated during World War I. Sarajevo, Bosnia has the ignoble reputation for being the impetus which started this war when on June 28, 1914 Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by Serbian nationalists. During World War I, ethnic tensions rose as Yugoslavia was divided between the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy and the Russo-French Alliance.

When Yugoslavia came into existence following World War I, it was a land of 24 million people with an estimated 24 different ethnic groups embracing three major religions (Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim). It was a country divided into six republics with its people speaking three very different languages written in both the Latin and the Cyrillic alphabets. This union, seemingly the mutual desire

⁸Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*. (London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 37.

⁹Fotitch, *The War We Lost*, p. 122.

¹⁰Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, p. 1.

of the “South Slavic People” (*Jugoslavija*), did not have the full backing of the nationalist leaders of the Serbian and Croatian people. During the period between the First and Second World Wars, Yugoslavia was known as a “powder keg”, susceptible to being involved in the rivalry of the great powers who were striving for domination of this region as well as control of the Eastern Mediterranean.¹¹ With the invasion of Hitler into Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia was divided, with Croatian and Slovenian allegiance going primarily to Germany, and Serbian allegiance resting on a Serbian dominated, Russian backed independent state of Yugoslavia. As would be expected, there were fierce ethnic clashes in Yugoslavia between the Croats and the Serbs. Each side was accused of ethnic cleansing with heavy losses claimed by both the Croats and the Serbs.¹² At the same time, the Nazi army was exterminating Jews, Gypsies, Muslims, and Serbian nationalists as was their custom throughout their occupied territories.

The end of World War II was followed by nearly 35 years of communist rule under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito. Tito was born in Croatia. He brought to bear a strong Partisan resistance force against the Nazi Army during the war. Tito emerged from the war a hero to some, a traitor to others. Near the end of the war Tito, aligned with Russia, became the most influential leader of the Partisan resistance fighters. He accused his rival General Draža Mihailovich, a Serbian resistance leader, of being a traitor and had him executed. Following the defeat of Hitler’s Germany, Tito led Yugoslavia as a communist state.

Immediately following the war there were further accusations of ethnic cleansing fueled by the flames of revenge between both Croats and Serbs. During the thirty-five year period between World War II and the death of Tito in 1980,

¹¹ Fotitch, *The War We Lost*, p. 323.

¹² Statistics vary considerably but some sources put the numbers of Serbs exterminated at a conservative estimate of six hundred thousand. See Fotitch, *The War We Lost*, p. 123.

acts of ethnic cleansing were not open for public or private discussion. This, in effect, put a cover over a boiling pot making it ready to explode.

One historian describes these six republics as “. . . six bows drawn tight. . . [the] bowstrings sing of hatred, group against group.”¹³ “Like an addiction . . .,” J. F. O. McAllister writes for *Time*, “. . . hatred is consuming the people who used to call themselves Yugoslavs.”¹⁴ It has been commonly understood for years by anyone who has studied the people in this region that tensions among ethnic groups ran high and that the area was susceptible to acts of aggression, neighbor against neighbor. Slaven Letica, the former Adviser to the President of Croatia (March 26, 1991) said of the Balkans:

There is a tradition of oral aggression in the Balkans. Someone will say “I’m going to kill him. I am going to kill him.” But then they will add “please stop me before I kill him.” . . . If the killing starts nobody will be able to stop it.¹⁵

Prior to the recent outbreak of hostilities, Letica accurately predicted what would take place during the ensuing four years of ethnic war in the former Yugoslavia. For four years the killing continued and nobody was able to stop it.

Ethnic tensions and nationalism surfaced in Yugoslavia in ways unseen since World War II. The nationals knew, as did others who studied Balkan history, that if a war ever broke out again in this land it could be another Holocaust.¹⁶ This is precisely what happened after Tito’s death as each republic of Yugoslavia began to vie for power, each asserting its own national independence. Hostilities and ethnic tensions increased until finally a series of “wars” erupted,

¹³Kenneth Danforth, “Yugoslavia: A House Much Divided,” *National Geographic*, 178 (August 1990), 102-103.

¹⁴J. F. O. McAllister, “Atrocity and Outrage,” *Time*, 140 (August 17, 1992), 24.

¹⁵Leonard J. Cohen, “The Disintegration of Yugoslavia,” *Current History*, 91 (November 1992), 369.

¹⁶Paul Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1995), p. 33.

eventually immersing Yugoslavia in a civil war which would become the bloodiest European conflict since World War II. When the Muslim majority in Bosnia voted on March 1, 1992 to make Bosnia and Hercegovina a separate and independent State under Muslim leadership, the Croats and Serbs began a four year long battle to wrestle from each other and from the Bosnian Muslims their portion of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Bell-Fialkoff, making reference to today's Balkan war, says that the "gruesome events being played out in former Yugoslavia are merely the second act of a tragedy that opened in April, 1941."¹⁷ The present day Balkan war is a conflict between the same three ethnic groups which have clashed in this region for centuries. Orthodox, Catholics, and Muslims each with their religious traditions and cultural differences have engaged in another round of ethnic contention which has once more brought appalling consequences to the Balkan peninsula.

What led up to the disintegration of Yugoslavia? Do these events show any similarities to Nazi Germany prior to and during World War II? How is it possible that members of a society would allow themselves to be manipulated in such a way that neighbor would commit unspeakable heinous acts of perversion against neighbor in the name of ethnic cleansing?

The Holocaust and Its Similarities to the Balkan Conflict

The Holocaust is Europe's most infamous societal contribution. Roy and Alice Eckardt in their book *Long Night's Journey into Day* define the Holocaust as the "Nazi regime's intention and systematic attempt to kill every Jew within its reach - - every adult, child and fetus."¹⁸ At the end of World War II, it

¹⁷Bell-Fialkoff, "A Brief History", p. 116.

¹⁸Roy A. Eckhardt, and Alice L. Eckhardt, *Long Night's Journey into Day: A Revised Retrospective on the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), p. 31.

was commonly understood by individuals and nations that the world would never again stand by and watch as entire national and religious groups were systematically destroyed in the name of some higher ideal.¹⁹ Yet a recent newspaper prints the following story:

The sound of machine guns was becoming louder and louder. We were obviously approaching them. The truck turned left and stopped in the grass. We saw a field covered with bodies. . . . They ordered us to come out and line up with our backs to the soldiers and our faces to the field of bodies. . . . I could hear automatic gunfire. They fell on me and I fell on my stomach. But I wasn't hit I didn't move. I stayed lying there for nine hours. . . . A soldier walked among the bodies and finished off those still moving with a pistol shot in the head. . . . Group by group, trucks brought prisoners, who were gunned down in turn. When it became too dark to see, the soldiers used the headlights of two backhoes. . . . Finally the shooting stopped. . . . The moonlight illuminated a sea of bodies. The only thing I saw was dead people all over the place, one on top of the other.²⁰

This is not the story of a victim of ethnic cleansing conducted under the leadership of Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany. It is the all too recent story of a Bosnian Muslim in Srebrenica, Bosnia in 1995. General Charles G. Boyd, USAF (Ret.) former Deputy Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command, from November 1992 to July 1995, said: “. . . the war in Bosnia has become a tragedy of proportions that parallel the Holocaust, an example of plain good against stark evil.”²¹ Nationwide ethnic cleansing employing the most despicable means has again taken place on European soil not 50 years after the fall of Nazi Germany. Similarities to both Nazi Germany and the former Yugoslavia prior to and during hostilities are evident. A cursory look at the two shows similarities in the progression of events which led toward ethnic cleansing in Nazi Germany and in

¹⁹ Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno*, p. 1.

²⁰ Aida Cerkez, “Killing Field: Survivors of Serb Massacre Say Hillside Red with Blood,” *The (Louisville) Courier - Journal*, Friday, October 6, 1995 sec. A, pp. 1, 11.

²¹ Charles G. Boyd, “Making Peace with the Guilty: The Truth About Bosnia.” *Foreign Affairs* (September - October 1995), 26.

the former Yugoslavia during this present conflict. By comparing these similarities, it can help to clarify how it is possible that neighbors can be seduced to rise up against neighbors in the most heinous fashion.

Extreme Nationalism

In both Nazi Germany and the former Yugoslavia there existed a strong sense of nationalism prior to large scale outbreaks of hostilities. Talon describes how racism in Nazi Germany gave rise to the “cult of exclusive German identity” which for the Nazi meant that “. . . life in this world is worthless and meaningless except in so far as it consists in the self-realization of the elite of the strong and the powerful.”²² Paul Mojzes also identifies negative effects of nationalism among different ethnic groups in the Balkans saying that “. . . there have been exaggerated expectations of greatness, backed up by far too little historical evidence of it. . . . Thus there are claims of ‘Great Serbia,’ ‘Great Croatia,’ ‘Great Macedonia,’ . . .”²³ Extreme nationalism leads to the extreme attempts of people and ethnic groups within heterogeneous geographical boundaries to try to purify and to protect their ethnic group. Extreme nationalism also lays the foundation of a political system driven by ethnic supremacists who promote their prejudice by focusing on ethnic politics.

“Ethnic Politics”

In both Nazi Germany and Yugoslavia prior to the war, ethnic supremacists emerged in places of authority and power where they could promote their ethnic politics. These ethnic supremacists, who held positions of authority in the legitimate government, abused their authority to perpetuate their perverted political ideals. The results were catastrophic. Germany’s Jews, Talon says, were

²²Talon, *The Origins of the Holocaust*, p. 196.

²³ Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno*, pp. 42, 43.

. . . handed over by a legitimate government to murderers organized by authorities and trained to hunt and kill, with one single provision, that everyone, *the entire nation* be murdered--men and women, old and young, healthy and sick and paralyzed, *everyone*, without any chance of even one of those condemned to extermination escaping his fate.²⁴

Mojzes, noting the same phenomenon in pre-war Yugoslavia, says that the former Communists, in order to cling to power, “. . . promoted an ethnic ideology in order to fan hatred and discord between ethnic groups and retake possession of at least some of the territories.”²⁵ These political leaders in both pre-war Germany and the former Yugoslavia enabled and instructed their propaganda machines to promote their ethnic politics with the purpose of expanding their circle of influence.

Dehumanizing Rhetoric Via Propaganda

In both situations a dehumanizing rhetoric via propaganda assaulted the peoples’ emotions encouraging them to turn against their neighbors. Talon says that in Germany “. . . nightmarish visions, provocative and inflammatory rhetoric . . . combined to remove ancient inhibitions, to break down existing barriers, to awaken dormant instincts and cravings.”²⁶ These dormant instincts caused German neighbors to persecute Jewish neighbors. In the same way political leaders wielding abusive power took advantage of the people in the former Yugoslavia and played on their memories of the past atrocities of World War II. Mojzes, speaking of the press and the media in the former Yugoslavia says that: “Press and media have fanned the smoldering fires of nationalism, disseminating the ideas of politicians, intellectuals, and army.”²⁷ When the media is controlled by a

²⁴Talon, *The Origins of the Holocaust*, p. 185.

²⁵ Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno*, p. 93.

²⁶ Talon, *The Origins of the Holocaust*, p. 200.

²⁷ Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno*, p. 167.

perverted and powerful authority which is determined to destroy the harmony of a nation of mixed ethnic groups, the resulting dehumanizing rhetoric can provide the impetus for neighbors to kill neighbors.

War Creates Opportunities for Genocide

This fourth similarity reveals how a manipulated media, using dehumanizing rhetoric could portray daily events in such a perverted way which turned common shop keepers into vicious perpetrators of ethnic cleansing throughout Germany and parts of Yugoslavia. Talon says that the disappearance of inhibitions against deviant acts does not take place overnight but that it is a “. . . protracted, gradual process of dialectical development.”²⁸ When this happens, Talon says, there was a transition from absence of inhibition to the actual commission of acts without precedent “. . . resulting from a lack of structure, opportunity, and a state of emergency giving rise to storms of emotion.”²⁹ These storms of emotion swept Nazi Germany’s Empire resulting in displays of hostility and aggression of German nationals toward their Jewish neighbors.

This similarity in Yugoslavia becomes evident as Mojzes describes how on May 2, 1991 the murder of two Croatian police in Vukovar (Croatia proper) by three Serbs was perverted by the press giving rise to a state of emergency in both Serbia and Croatia. Mojzes says that the Serbian press portrayed this incident as sufficient evidence to convince all in Serbia that Croats were carrying out genocide against the Serb population. At the same time, the Croatian press used this as evidence that Serbia was engaging in organized ethnic cleansing against their state.³⁰ This resulted in uncertainty and confusion on both sides leading each

²⁸ Talon, *The Origins of the Holocaust*, p. 187.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno*, p. 103.

to feel like they had to protect themselves in order to survive this threat. This promoted an atmosphere of aggression, fueled by hatred and fear, which led the nations one step closer to beginning the cycle of ethnic cleansing.

Average Folks Become Murderers
With the Government's Blessing

The results of these previous similarities, all orchestrated together by nationalist leaders, caused the average person in both Germany and in Yugoslavia to turn against their minority neighbors and to engage in active aggression and deadly activism through ethnic cleansing. Without involving the average person in acts of aggression and hostility, the politicians and soldiers alone would have no chance of success. Talon tells us that

Hitler depended on the consent of associates who would carry out his monstrous plans; he needed hundreds, thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of assistants at all levels from the most highly-placed, sophisticated and 'well-bred' intimates who participated in the decision making, down to the lowliest apprentice in the arts of homicide--the sadistic killer or the mindless robot.³¹

Similarly, in the Balkans, decisions were made by and carried out by ordinary leaders of the republics of the former Yugoslavia. Mojzes says that the leaders of the newly established successor states were "bank presidents, generals, directors of enterprises, lawyers, authors, [and] educators"³² Mojzes also assents that the war is ". . . not a war of armies but a war of neighbors who want to destroy, eliminate, partition, and grab whatever they can grab from the former Yugoslavia."³³ Furthermore he tells us that most of the brutalized victims of this war recognized their torturers as ". . . being former classmates or neighbors rather

³¹ Talon, *The Origins of the Holocaust*, p. 186.

³² Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno*, p. 62.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

than total strangers.”³⁴ Together, these five similarities outline the ingredients necessary to turn ethnically mixed groups of people against each other to the point that murder, mass executions, and ethnic cleansing become the order of the day.

The Cycle of Revenge

Snježana, a 21-year-old Croatian woman from Bosnia, tells how her grandmother and uncle were both shot dead by a Serbian in front of her house. The murderer then stole their tractor at gun point. After the Dayton Peace Plan was implemented in Bosnia, this area where she lived fell under Serbian control. The man passed Snježana one day while he was driving the tractor which he stole from her uncle. He “greet” her, as is common among the people. She is forced to return his greeting or risk being shot. Shortly after this incident, she is relocated to Croatia. She says: “How can I forget and forgive this man for what he has done to us?”³⁵ Hatred and revenge would seem to be the natural response in this situation. This cycle of revenge is tearfully described by one Bosnian refugee:

They killed my husband and son. They burned our home. But they can never rest easy, because one day we will do the same to them, or worse. My children will get their revenge, or their children.³⁶

Mojzes explains how Tito’s regime had placed a taboo on the retrieval of memory of the traumas caused during World War II. The present nationalist leaders released the floodgates of memory without any selectivity, “. . . so that many untraumatized citizens got caught up in wanting to avenge themselves for

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ This story was told to the author during the teaching of the seminar on Forgiveness and Reconciliation at the Life Center in March, 1996.

³⁶ McAllister, “Atrocity and Outrage,” 24.

real and imaginary wounds of the past.”³⁷ The result is that there is an

... inability to experience a catharsis over past traumas and crimes, which might enable people to free themselves for the future without the constant need to relive traumas and add new ones. Thus there is a continual demand for payment in blood for what others have done since time immemorial.³⁸

The results of this cycle of revenge when employed in ethnic cleansing are catastrophic. Once the cycle begins it is very difficult to stop. If it is to stop, it must be replaced by a better alternative.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation: An Alternative to the Cycle of Revenge

In November 1995, the Dayton Peace Accord was signed by the warring parties, showing the first real lasting signs of peace in the former Yugoslavia. As peace takes priority over war, people will begin to rebuild their lives. As they begin this process, there needs to be a positive approach to the settling of problems between ethnic groups. Another method for dealing with differences, other than with hatred and revenge, must be modeled. A biblical model for forgiveness and reconciliation using Jesus’ teaching and example of forgiveness, combined with Paul’s plea that Christians become ambassadors of reconciliation to a lost world (2 Cor. 5: 20), is such an alternative model.

For such a model of forgiveness and reconciliation to be successfully implemented into the area of the former Yugoslavia through a series of teaching seminars, it is imperative that it provide insight into the understanding of the dynamics of forgiveness and reconciliation which will be meaningful to people who have experienced war.

³⁷ Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno*, p. 41.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40, 41.

Dynamics of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Morris Ashcraft, in his book *The Forgiveness of Sins*, describes how a healthy understanding of forgiveness can lead to renewed relationships. He says:

A man by an act of will lifts another from the miry clay of guilt and sets his feet upon a rock. By forgiving, one individual sets forces in motion which revolutionize and transform a family from a group of estranged individuals into a community of persons which encourages creative living.³⁹

It is possible that ethnically diverse peoples of the former Yugoslavia can break the old cycle of revenge, and replace it with the biblical model of forgiveness which leads to reconciliation. An understanding of the following dynamics of forgiveness from the perspective of people who have experienced great pain and loss is a beginning in the move toward this transformation into a community which encourages creative living.

Being Forgiven

Before victims can be free to forgive others for injustices committed against them, they must first have experienced forgiveness in their own lives. This gives them a point of reference from which forgiveness can be extended to others. From a biblical perspective, one must first of all experience God's forgiveness for those injustices committed against him. The Bible concludes that wholeness, in a spiritual sense, comes from forgiveness of sins through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This is the first step in learning how to forgive others. With an understanding of forgiveness from God's perspective, forgiveness can be granted to others in the most miraculous manner. A mother, describing her struggle to forgive the man who murdered her daughter, says:

³⁹Morris Ashcraft, *The Forgiveness of Sins* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), p. 110.

I believe if I had not made that decision to receive Christ, and if I had not grown in my relationship with Him in the following years, I probably would not have been able to forgive Diane's murderer.⁴⁰

Receiving God's forgiveness is the foundation of being able to forgive others. Experiencing what it means to be free of sin and guilt can empower people to extend forgiveness to those who have wronged them.

Forgiving Oneself

James R. Bjorge, in his book *Living in the Forgiveness of God*, accurately enumerates the beginning stages of the biblical cycle of forgiveness. He says:

Forgiveness is never really complete until we complete a cycle. First, we acknowledge and receive God's forgiving grace through Christ. Second, we forgive others who have wronged us. Third, we are able to forgive ourselves.⁴¹

Those who have accepted forgiveness to the extent of being able to forgive themselves, can make a tremendous contribution to the work of promoting forgiveness in a Christian context. Take for example the Apostles Peter and Paul. Both had ample reason for harboring guilt and shame toward the Lord: Peter for denying Jesus on the night He was betrayed, and Paul for persecuting Christians prior to his conversion. Yet these two men accepted, applied, and taught forgiveness which leads toward reconciliation after they accepted their own shortcomings and applied Christ's forgiveness to their own lives. Once biblical forgiveness is accepted and applied toward oneself, it must be appropriated toward those who have caused one personal pain and loss.

⁴⁰ Goldi Bristol and Carol McGinnis, *When It's Hard to Forgive* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1984), p. 28

⁴¹ James R. Bjorge, *Living in the Forgiveness of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), pp. 47-48.

How Do You Forgive the Unrepentant?

A typical response during a counseling session on forgiveness may yield the following response: “Ask him to forgive me? . . . For what? He is the one who has wrecked my life! Why doesn’t he ask me to forgive him?”⁴² It is natural to withhold forgiveness until the wrongdoer repents and asks for forgiveness. This, however, is not the biblical model for forgiveness. Lockerbie illustrates this situation in the following way:

But what if “the party of the second part” is stony cold, uncooperative, will not. . . plea for forgiveness? The root of bitterness has become deep and entwined and there is no desire for a renewed good relationship. What then? Our part is to obey, to make every effort to reach out in love and forgiveness. The results we must leave with God. We cannot do the Holy Spirit’s work.⁴³

It is possible for someone who has been wronged to extend forgiveness to a perpetrator even in a situation when forgiveness is not sought or accepted by the perpetrator. If this were not the case, then there would be justification for withholding forgiveness resulting in a permanent breakdown of the relationship making reconciliation unobtainable.

Is There Justification for Withholding Forgiveness?

In an article in the *Christian Century*, Pastor Richard P. Lord tries to answer Betty Jane’s question: “Preacher, do I have to forgive a man who murdered my four sons?” Lord approaches the question by focusing on two aspects of forgiveness: Forgiveness as forgetting and forgiveness as excusing the sin. He concludes that:

⁴² Bristol, *When It’s Hard to Forgive*, p. 152.

⁴³ Jeanette Lockerbie, *Forgive, Forget, and Be Free* (New York: Christian Herald Books, 1981), p. 23.

Those of us who speak on behalf of the Christian community can speak of God's mercy to the truly repentant, but we have no right to insist that the victim establish a relationship with his or her victimizer to effect a reconciliation.⁴⁴

For Richard Lord, forgiveness in this situation falls short of reconciliation. His response to Betty Jane Spencer is no, she does not have to forgive the man who killed her sons. In trying to protect Betty Jane from having to pronounce absolution on this man, Lord promotes one side of forgiveness at the expense of reconciliation. The lingering rift can result in a vengeful and unsettled spirit, thus preventing reconciliation. Therefore, it should be evident that there can be no justification for withholding forgiveness if linking people together in harmonious relationships is the biblical goal for estranged parties.

The illustration of God the Father, extending forgiveness to the Roman soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross (Luke 23:34), is the biblical model which seeks peace and harmony between estranged parties. When forgiveness is withheld and reconciliation is prohibited, there can be serious and lingering consequences.

Physical and Physiological Benefits of Forgiveness

Sandy and Ben lost their baby to a deranged man who attempted to steal Sandy's car while their baby was in the child's car seat. After a spoiled attempt he grabbed the baby and as Sandy and others watched, hurled the baby into the air. The baby fell onto the pavement and died. Sandy was a committed Christian. Even though her heart was crushed, she realized the only way to deal with this crime and remain free in Christ would be to forgive the man who killed the baby. She leaned on the Lord, exchanging her hate for his love. Sandy's husband responded differently. Ben threatened to kill David, the killer, if he ever

⁴⁴ Richard P. Lord, "Do I Have to Forgive?," *The Christian Century*, 108 (October 9, 1991), 902-903.

saw him again. He became filled with bitterness and hate. Ben's thoughts were continuously occupied with revenge. He took out his hostility on his wife and two older sons by treating them with cruelty and disrespect. He was furious with them for forgiving the baby's killer. He turned to alcohol to relieve him of his internal pain and began reaping the fruit of unforgiveness. Ben's marriage ended in divorce and his intense hatred eroded his personality.⁴⁵ Sandy understood and practiced forgiveness from a biblical perspective, Ben did not.

Withholding forgiveness can lead to serious physical and physiological effects. Lockerbie and Bristol enumerate very clearly some of the detrimental effects of harboring resentment through unforgiveness.⁴⁶ A short list would include body signals such as: vague pains, not feeling good, severe tension, headaches, chest pains, arthritic flare-ups, and muscle spasms. Other symptoms can include emotional stress, anxiety, fear, uncertainty, and depression. Tangible body effects can lead to physical trauma, sickness, and cancer. Lockerbie points out that there are other costs related to unresolved resentment and unforgiveness such as damaged relationships in the family, the church, the work place, and in the community. On the other hand, a healthy biblical understanding of forgiveness can help one to employ a reconciling spirit as one goes through life's painful experiences. When put into a proper biblical perspective, friends, neighbors, ethnic groups, and even ethnically integrated societies and nations can live together in harmony.

⁴⁵ Bristol, *When It's Hard to Forgive*, p. 62.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 131 - 139.

Conclusion: A Biblical Model of Forgiveness and
Reconciliation for a Divided People
in the Balkans

On March 25, 1993, the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued a list of recommendations to the religious people in the United States related to various aspects of Bosnia. They focused on three things: prayer, solidarity, and reconciliation.⁴⁷ This moment, not this particular event, was a turning point in America's involvement in the war in Bosnia. Until this time most of the world wanted to see Europe solve its internal problems without outside intervention. These Bishops realized that only a biblical foundation for forgiveness could lead to reconciliation among the ethnically diverse people in the former Yugoslavia. They called on the community of God to be united in prayer toward this end. Paul Mojzes is convinced that only a miraculous intervention from God can bring these people together in peace. He says:

I know of no other word to describe the ability to overcome the hurt of losing members of one's own family and to deal with hatred that consumes the killers of another ethnic group except to label it "miraculous." . . . In that sense, peace in the Balkans will be a miracle of God, who will use as divine tools all those able to forgive rather than avenge.⁴⁸

It will require a miracle of God to break the long cycle of hatred and revenge which has become so embedded in the minds and hearts of this people. This vicious cycle can only be broken as individuals experience the benefits of forgiving, forgetting and reconciling relationships. Corrie ten Boom had such an experience and shared her journey with millions of people. Reflecting on one such story she says:

⁴⁷ George W. Hunt, "That Old 'Ancient Hatreds' Rag," *America*, 169 (April 24, 1993), 3.

⁴⁸ Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno*, pp. 227-228.

And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. 'I forgive you brother,' I cried. 'With all my heart.'⁴⁹

Only the biblical model of forgiveness consistently applied by Christians such as Corrie ten Boom can allow God's miraculous work to bring about reconciliation between divided people.

In the February 5, 1996 issue of *Newsweek*, Melinda Liu and Stacy Sullivan co-authored an article on Bosnia entitled "The Dead Cry Out."⁵⁰ Enclosed in this article are pictures of bony fragments of bodies buried in a mass grave reaching out as if they were trying to be noticed. It is as if justice was calling out from the grave to be rendered on those who have participated in this bloody war. Will revenge water these graves with more Bosnian blood, or can these people grasp the biblical vision for settling their pain, putting to rest those who lie buried in these mass graves? The Christian community has an opportunity to present and model a biblical perspective of forgiveness and reconciliation. The first step is teaching and leading the local Christian community in the process so that they can influence those with whom they have contact. It is a slow and arduous process which demands patience and persistence and can only be accomplished in God's strength. It is the intent of this ministry project to present an alternative for breaking the cycle of revenge. That alternative is a biblical model of retaliation through forgiveness and love leading to reconciliation and peace among former neighbors.

⁴⁹Corrie ten Boom, *Tramp for the Lord*, (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1974), p. 57.

⁵⁰Melinda Liu and Stacy Sullivan. "The Dead Cry Out," *Newsweek* (February 5, 1996), 16-17.

Chapter 4

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEACHING MODULE

Teaching materials focusing on forgiveness and reconciliation are needed by the Christian community in the former Yugoslavia as a tool to proclaim the relevance of the Word of God for war victims. Power-driven people, with a desire to split Yugoslavia along geographical and ethnic boundaries for personal gain and profit, stirred up the people of this land, inciting them to take drastic measures against their neighbors. This resulted in four years of civil war. During the war, international Christian organizations worked with national Christians in the area of the former Yugoslavia to send humanitarian supplies to people in need. They noticed that people began responding to the good news of the gospel. It became evident that the majority of these people did not support the war and that they were intently searching for inner peace in the midst of outer turmoil. They responded favorably to the news that God loves them. In their efforts to minister to these people Christian aid workers, church leaders, and denominational leaders recognized simultaneously in every area of the former Yugoslavia that there was a great need among war victims to find and extend forgiveness which leads to reconciliation. Leaders among Christian humanitarian aid organizations recognized the importance of teaching these war victims the biblical understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation. This was seen as a first step toward promoting a healthy attitude among those who have suffered at the hands of others during four years of war.

After describing the basic teaching goals of this ministry project to one of the leaders of a Baptist humanitarian organization in Croatia, it was agreed that such a seminar could be beneficial if it were taught in both the proper setting and

format. Biblical concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation are complex and challenging as one begins to understand God's plan for reconciling the world to himself. Therefore, material should be clearly and systematically taught to ensure the usefulness of the seminar. It was concluded then, that it would be necessary to spend at least ten days with a group of war victims in a relaxed atmosphere where relationships could be built between the seminar participants and the seminar leaders. During this time the material could be slowly and progressively taught in a repetitive manner.

After the initial development of the project, it was decided that the seminar would focus on three basic components: small focus group sessions, pre and post-questionnaires to be completed by the seminar participants, and seven basic teaching sessions.

Preparing for the Seminar

The dates for the seminar were fixed for March 21-31, 1996. Invitations were sent to Pastor Ladislav Ruzička of Karlovac, Croatia. He was asked to organize a group of Bosnian refugees who were living in a small village one hour drive from his church. He invited a group of participants to come to the seminar. Bus transportation was arranged for these people to travel the three-hour drive to the Life Center. They arrived on March 21.

The group spent the first three days settling into their accommodations at the Life Center. During this time the staff at the Life Center organized opportunities for both the staff and the Life Center guests to become better acquainted. On Saturday evening the group was divided into five groups of seven to nine people. At that time, staff members of the Life Center were assigned to serve as group leaders. During the first three days preceding the teaching of the first session, I met with the leaders of these small groups to prepare them for the

upcoming seminar. We discussed in detail the three component parts of the seminar material. The first component was the focus group session and the role of the group leaders during these sessions.

An Introduction to the Focus Group Sessions

The small group leaders were a critical part of the seminar. Most of the group leaders at the Life Center have been involved in working with refugees for several years. However, small group sessions are not a part of their regular ministry strategy. The small groups were critical to the success of the project because it would be in these small groups that the group leaders could explore the participants' comprehension of and feelings toward the material. In many respects the small group leaders were the real seminar teachers while the seven teaching sessions only provided an impetus for the discussion of the material among the group participants. For this reason, it was important to lay a solid foundation for the use of small groups during our initial meetings.

To be a good group leader, the leader must have a good knowledge of the material to be discussed. Since they did not have a chance to preview this material before the seminar, each group leader was provided a study guide for each teaching session.¹ It was the job of each group leader to complete the study guide during and after the teaching sessions in order to use it as an introduction to that afternoon's focus group meetings. As an introduction, it would lead the group into a discussion of the main thought of each teaching session for further interaction by the group.

The teaching material was "heard" by the small group leaders as well as the group participants during the teaching session, but it was in the small group that it was "understood" through the interaction of the small group participants.

¹Appendix B.

To encourage interaction with this material, and to keep the group focused on the daily teaching sessions, each group leader was given a list of discussion questions for each session.² Used together, the study guides and the accompanying list of focus group questions helped ensure that the group sessions would stay focused on the session material.

To enforce the importance of focusing on one main thought during each small group session, I met together with the group leaders every day prior to each teaching session for a quick review of the material. At this time, I would highlight the main thought for the upcoming session and stress how important it would be for each group leader to comprehend this main thought during the teaching session. Each of these main thoughts were the basic load bearing blocks of the entire teaching session. If these basics were ignored or misunderstood, the entire teaching session would lose its strength because repetition had been ignored.

With an overview of the teaching material and with an idea of how each session carried a main thought from session to session, it was important to cover a review of the basics of leading small groups. I instructed the group leaders in the basics of leading small groups focusing on issues such as group dynamics, leading discussions, avoiding wasted time pursuing unimportant issues, and how to stay focused on the main issue.

After an overview of the teaching session with the group leaders was completed, and after the participant group was divided into small groups, each small group leader was ready to lead their group through the pre seminar questionnaire.

An Introduction of the Pre and Post-Questionnaires

Another integral part of the seminar was the pre and post-question-

²Appendix C.

naire. Since these questionnaires would serve as a basis for measuring the quality of the project it was important to develop the best means and method for obtaining the basic information necessary in the pre-questionnaire³ which would give meaning to the interpretation of the post-questionnaire.⁴ After considering several options on the various ways the questionnaires could be completed, it was determined that it would be most beneficial to allow each participant to privately complete their pre and post-questionnaires. Knowing that many of the senior participants of the group would not be prone to write out a life history, questions were limited to simple objective responses with a brief introduction into their life history. The life history introduction was the only personal information which was obtained to provide an overall impression of the respondent. Both the pre and post-questionnaires were number coded so that the respondents could not be identified. This provided a sense of confidentiality which was assumed would lead toward a more honest response to the questionnaire. Prior to the beginning of the first teaching session, each person completed the pre-questionnaire with needed assistance given by group leaders. The questionnaire was composed of questions which would give insight into the respondents' personal history, their understanding of God, religion, Christianity, forgiveness, and reconciliation. This pre-questionnaire would be used as a starting point in understanding the participants' entry understanding of the material. It would then be used as a standard for comparing their exit knowledge of the material. After this was completed the first teaching session could begin.

An Introduction of the Seven Teaching Sessions

The last integral part of the seminar, the teaching sessions, were also

³Appendix D.

⁴Appendix E.

reviewed during the first few days of the seminar prior to the start of the first session. It was explained to the group leaders how these lectures, each about one hour in length, would use a variety of biblical stories to teach the basic biblical truths of forgiveness and reconciliation. They would be taught over a seven day period. Each session was designed to serve as a building block upon which the succeeding sessions would be built. Repetition was important because the subject material in these sessions was more complex than the basic discipleship material usually used with newly converted Christians or non-believers. It was noted that it is difficult for mature Christians to grasp an understanding of biblical forgiveness and reconciliation, even more so for non-Christians or traditionally nominal religious adherents.

During the meetings with the small group leaders it was explained how material from previous sessions would flow into the succeeding sessions. I gave an oral overview of each teaching session to the group leaders. After a brief review of each teaching session one central thought from each teaching session was highlighted as the “main thought” or “key teaching focus” of each session. This main thought was to be the focus of the small group sessions. The main theme for each session was reinforced to the group leader through the completion of the study guide and by a daily review of the material prior to each teaching session and small group session. After the completion of this brief training period and after the pre-questionnaires were completed, the seminar began with the first teaching session.

Each day began with a teaching session followed by the small group session.⁵ The seminar lasted seven days. Here is a digest of the seven teaching sessions and a synopsis of the main teaching concept which was carried over from lesson to lesson.

⁵Appendix F.

Session 1: “Life is not Fair”

Session one began with an introduction of how bad things happen to good people. Bad things happen as a result of sin which entered into the world as described in Genesis, 1-11. Sin is defined as rebellion against God. We see the effects of sin in our society because people rebel against God by disobeying His Word. Sin is a bad thing and the effects of sin are also bad. One of the results of sin is that it is common for us to blame others for our mistakes and sins against God. Also, when others wrong us, we dwell on blaming them more than on solving the problem. As we blame others for wrongs committed against us, we build up walls of resentment against these people. When people sin against others there is going to be the opportunity for either “resentment and alienation” or “forgiveness and reconciliation” to take place between estranged parties. It is our choice how we resolve our problems and conflicts.

The central thought from this teaching session which was carried over into the small group was that sin, which resulted when humanity rebelled against God through disobedience, brought pain and suffering into God’s perfect world. The result is that life is not fair and that bad things do happen to good people. In the same way, bad things and good things happen to both bad people and good people. It was important for these war victims to know that they had not been guilty in bringing on this war and their suffering. War happens and innocent victims suffer.

Session 2: “Forgiveness Provides a Way for Reconciliation”

In the beginning, God was offended when Adam and Eve first sinned against Him. Because of this sin against God, a “wall” was constructed between the sinner and God. This wall has two sides. One faces God, the other faces the sinner. In order for God to have a relationship with sinful humankind, the wall

must be destroyed from both sides. For God to destroy the barrier of sin which was committed against Him by sinful humankind, “atonement” would have to take place for the sin. This would make humankind “at one” with God. God instituted a process in the Old Testament whereby His people could be cleansed from their sins against Him. This process is described in the first five books of the Old Testament and is usually referred to as the “Law.”

The central thought from this teaching session which was carried over into the small group was that in spite of humanity’s culpability in bringing sin into the world and alienating God from the “crown” of his creation, God provided a way for lost humanity to be reconciled to him. God does not want sinful humanity to be eternally separated from him but desires that the world be reconciled to him.

Session 3: “The Sins of a Great King”

The other side of the wall, the one facing the sinner, is broken down through repentance. This process is beautifully illustrated as we read in Psalm 51 about King David’s prayer of repentance. We learned how David showed great sorrow and repentance because he sinned against God. He asked God to “blot out” his transgressions and to make him “white as snow.” David wanted God to forgive him of the sins he committed against him. David wanted to correct his relationship with God through confession and repentance of those sins. His heart’s desire was restoration and peace with God through forgiveness.

The central thought from this teaching session which was carried over into the small group was that sin produces devastating effects in the lives of people. When this sin is recognized and when sorrow is sincerely expressed for one’s sin, God is standing ready to forgive those sins and to restore the sinner to a right relationship with Him. This is the basic meaning of reconciliation.

Session 4 : “A Case Study Focusing
on the Dynamics of Forgiveness
and Reconciliation”

When acts of evil are committed against us, things began to happen which set off a chain of events which develop into a methodology for dealing with our problems and with those who cause us problems. Usually it is a negative reaction, which is natural because of "sin." This reaction is characterized by a natural desire for revenge whenever one is wronged. This produces more hate between estranged parties and produces a desire for reciprocation furthering the desire for more revenge, hate and further reciprocation. This is an unending cycle of hate and revenge. There is a better way of processing feelings and hurts when bad things happen. The first step is to know what it is like to be forgiven. For the Christian, this is an experience which takes place during conversion. This leads the Christian to be able to receive God's forgiveness resulting in reconciliation between God and the sinner. Thus the conversion experience is completed and forgiveness is finalized through reconciliation. Thus, when a Christian is wronged, forgiveness can be extended to the one who was at fault. When this forgiveness is received, reconciliation takes place between estranged parties. When people understand the biblical basis for forgiveness extended to all people at all times, reconciliation can become the natural result of forgiveness granted and received leading to an epidemic of reconciliation in the world.

To break the cycle of sin, hate, and revenge and to apply this biblical cycle for forgiveness and reconciliation, we need to understand the meaning and dynamics of forgiveness. This is best understood when we have received forgiveness for something we have done. The greater forgiveness we have received, the greater forgiveness we will be able to extend others.

The central thought from this teaching session which was carried over into the small group was that reconciliation can only come after forgiveness has

taken place. Reconciliation can only take place when the victim forgives the perpetrator and when the perpetrator expresses sorrow for the act or acts committed and shows a desire to be reconciled with the person against whom the sin was committed. God wants sinful humankind to be reconciled to Him and He wants individuals to be reconciled one to another. This is the heart of the message of the Bible.

Session 5: “New Covenant Forgiveness and Reconciliation”

God removed the barrier of sin between himself and sinful humanity when Jesus died on the cross as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. This does not mean that all of humanity has been reconciled and restored to God because of the one sacrifice of Jesus. When a lost person believes the gospel message of forgiveness and reconciliation and accepts God by accepting his forgiveness, reconciliation takes place. This “process” is often referred to as “salvation”.

The sacrifice of Jesus is central to this session focusing on Hebrews, chapters 8-12. Jesus is understood as the High Priest who made one sacrifice for the sins of the world. At this point a review of the sacrificial system beginning in Genesis and traced throughout the Old Testament coming to fruition at the cross, helps session participants to see God’s plan for forgiveness and reconciliation for lost humanity. After Jesus, the High Priest, finished his job he “sat down” next to the Heavenly Father. This event ushered in the New Covenant between God and humanity which was sealed by the shedding of Jesus’ blood. At the same time, the Old Covenant, based upon strict adherence to the legal system for the cleansing of sin, was made obsolete. Jesus made a one time sacrifice for the sins of the world and it is through the acceptance of this sacrifice that sinners can be converted and reconciled to God for eternity.

The central thought from this teaching session which was carried over

into the small group is that only by accepting Jesus' sacrifice for sins can one accept God's forgiveness. Only with a contrite and sorrowful heart can a lost person receive God's forgiveness and be reconciled to him for eternity.

Session 6: "New Testament Case Studies"

Everyone has the same opportunity to accept God's forgiveness and to be reconciled or restored to fellowship with him. Salvation is a two sided coin: one side is forgiveness, the other side is repentance/acceptance. Before salvation can take place, the sinner or lost person must show sorrow and repentance for their sins and desire to live in a reconciled relationship with God. It is by this faithful act that God completes the work of salvation in one's heart.

One of the signs that a Christian has grasped the meaning of biblical forgiveness which leads to reconciliation is that forgiveness is extended to others when wrongs are committed against them. The first of two parables of Jesus which I have entitled "Receiving Forgiveness Enables Forgiving Others," is taken from Matthew 18:21-35. The central focus of this text is that true forgiveness which has been received from God by the Christian must be extended to others who have wronged them. The second parable, found in Luke 7:36-50, I have entitled "Great Forgiveness Results in Great Love Toward the Forgiver." In this parable Simon, who was forgiven little, loved little. In comparison to Simon is the prostitute. She received forgiveness for more significant sins and in so doing showed sorrow for those sins with a display of her reciprocal love toward Jesus, the forgiver.

The central thought from this teaching session which was carried over into the small group was that these two parables teach the simple message that Christians show that they have been forgiven when they forgive others who wrong them. God's example of forgiveness becomes our model for forgiving others.

Biblical forgiveness flows out of our love and appreciation for what God has done for us and is extended to others who have wronged us.

Session 7: “What Will I Do?”

All of humanity is born spiritually dead with a disease called “sin.” A cure for sin is necessary which in turn leads toward the receiving of eternal life. Jesus offers lost humanity both the cure for sin and eternal life. No amount of ritual, self-discipline, or change of environment can make one clean and acceptable before God. No one can live up to God’s standard for holiness. Jesus fulfilled God’s standard for holiness and died as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. When someone receives Christ, all their sins are washed away or covered and they are declared to be righteous before God. A person can not become righteous through their own efforts. God’s standard is much too high. When God covers the sins of someone, he covers them with the righteousness of Christ by providing them with a “robe of righteousness” which meets his perfect standard for holiness (see Isaiah 61:10). Then God, in his love, sees this person “through Jesus Christ” as his perfect son or daughter. Perfection comes not because of one’s individual perfection, but rather because of Jesus’ perfection. Through being forgiven, one can also learn to forgive others.

At this point, it is stressed that forgiveness which is received must be expressed by the extension of forgiveness toward others. It is one thing to forgive a small thing which was committed against you such as someone telling you a lie, stealing a small sum of money, or saying something bad about you. It is quite another thing to forgive someone for killing your child, raping your wife, or destroying your home. These are difficult things to accept. When we are first learning to forgive, we can get overwhelmed as we think of every wrong deed that has ever been committed against us and our family. We think: “I can’t forgive all

this.” That is true. We may not be able to forgive everything that ever happened to us at one moment. Therefore, it was emphasized that forgiveness is a process and that choosing not to forgive has great effects on our lives both mentally and physically.

The conclusion to session seven is an evangelistic appeal to each participant. Prior to this session the plan of salvation has been presented to the group participants during the week. What it means to be a born-again Christian has been made clear in a repetitive fashion culminating with the seventh session. At this time an invitation is extended to each group participant to accept God’s plan for salvation as is characterized in the receiving and extending of forgiveness, even to one’s enemies. Through this experience salvation is realized and reconciliation becomes a goal of the new believer.

The central thought from this teaching session which was carried over into the small group was that being a Christian can give one peace in the midst of inner turmoil resulting from having an unforgiving spirit. This is God’s desire for lost humanity and only by experiencing God’s forgiveness can people forgive others. Extending forgiveness to others is a sign that one has received his forgiveness and is reconciled to him.

Completing the Post-Questionnaire

At the end of the seventh teaching session every participant was given a post-questionnaire. They were asked to go to a quiet place and to carefully consider each question as they completed the objective questions on the questionnaire. They were given one hour to complete this assignment. At the conclusion of that hour they met for their final small group session. This was a time to discuss together the implications and ramifications of the teaching seminar. They were asked to make comments about the subject material which

were fresh in their minds after the completion of the post-questionnaire. The final evaluations and results of the sessions, the focus groups, and the questionnaires will be discussed in chapter five.

Chapter 5

EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter is divided into three basic parts. The first part covers the results of the seminar by comparing the group participants' pre-questionnaire with their post-questionnaire. The second section is an evaluation of the ministry tools used in this project: the pre and post-questionnaire, the teaching material and the small group sessions. An evaluation of each tool is followed by suggested revisions. The third section includes conclusions drawn, as well as suggestions for future use by Baptist Unions in the former Yugoslavia.

A Summary of the Results of the Seminar

On Sunday, March 24, 1996 each group leader led his or her group through the completion of the pre-seminar questionnaire. During the week that followed, group participants attended seven teaching sessions focusing on forgiveness and reconciliation taught from a biblical perspective. At the end of the week, each group participant completed a post-seminar questionnaire. In the weeks that followed, the pre and post-questionnaires were compared with the purpose of determining the effectiveness of the seminar. The pre and post-questionnaires served three purposes. The first purpose was to give the group leaders and the session teacher insight into the background of the participants with a special understanding of their recent struggles, their understanding of God, and their basic views toward religion and Christianity. The second purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching material. The primary goal here was to evaluate the participants' pre-seminar understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation with their post-seminar understanding of these subjects. The third

purpose of the questionnaire was to gain insight into the participants' personal evaluation of the seminar. From the participants' perspective, did this material change their understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation in a way that was significant to them? Has an assimilation of this material into their belief system been recognized in a positive way? These three evaluations taken from the pre and post-questionnaires will provide insight into whether or not the seminar met its purpose and goals. Here is a report of the findings of these questionnaires.¹

The Background of the Seminar Participants

Thirty-nine participants arrived at the Life Center to attend the seminar. They ranged in age from 17 to 71. There were 12 men and 27 women. The seminar participants were divided into five groups.²

All of the participants lived in Banja Luka, Bosnia prior to and during the four years of war. Most of the participants were Croatian by nationality. Being from Croatian descent but living in a territory under Serbian control made life difficult for them during the war. They were treated harshly by their Serbian neighbors who were the majority in this Serbian enclave in Bosnia proper. All of the participants had experienced great losses during the past four years. Loss of loved ones was common, as was the loss of home and land. Many of the participants were from divided families with close relatives fleeing to other countries

¹ It should be noted that the most significant influence on the participants' understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation was brought about through an understanding of the material presented in the seven teaching sessions. However, the participants' interaction with this material plays a significant role in how the material was learned and assimilated into their religious belief system. This took place during the week as participants discussed and debated the material. It was not uncommon to hear participants discussing this material frequently during meal times, coffee breaks, and strolls on the beach. Another significant influence on each participant was interaction with the members of their small group. Each small group was different dynamically and its members were influenced uniquely by each group leader. For these reasons, it is not possible to evaluate accurately all of the influences on each participant which led to the changes from the pre-questionnaire to the post-questionnaire. Therefore, it is only possible to use the seven teaching sessions as a standard in measuring changes in their perceptions of the material.

² Appendix G.

early in the war as refugees. Literally, these men and women had family members dispersed throughout the world, many not knowing the whereabouts of close family members. As a result of the negotiations of the Dayton Peace Plan, these refugees were forced out of Banja Luka by the Serbian majority in December, 1995. They were sent to Plaski, Croatia where they were re-settled by the Croatian government. Plaski is a small village about two hours from Banja Luka by car. They have been temporarily re-settled in vacated homes of Serbian people who recently left the area after the Croatian offensive drove them out in the Fall of 1995. They have lived the past four years relying on resources from humanitarian relief organizations. They list the Red Cross, *Karitas* (the Catholic relief agency) and two Baptist relief agencies as those organizations responsible for providing them with life sustaining resources throughout the war.

The Participants' Understanding of God

Knowing that religious differences have played a significant part in the break-up of Yugoslavia and the ensuing war, it was important to understand the religious background of the participants. The questionnaire sought to glean an understanding of the groups' religious background by asking questions concerning their religious beliefs. For example, is religion for everyone (yes 89%), and does religion help people when they have a problem (yes/sometimes 76%).

The participants indicated that their understanding of God is traditionally Christian. They affirmed that God exists (85%), that he loves his creation (62%) and that he is righteous (71%). Seventy-one percent believe that God is involved in their everyday life and that ultimately he will correct the problem of evil in the world (60%). The pre-questionnaire indicated that the participants have a healthy understanding of God. This healthy attitude toward God provided an open attitude as the seminar progressed.

Basic Views of Religion and Christianity

Questions relating to the traditional practices of religious people were asked. For example, what are the general practices of religious people with regard to attending a worship service, reading a holy book, praying, and following the traditions of a religion? The overwhelming majority of the group answered these questions as one might expect for a traditionally religious person. When asked if the participant viewed himself or herself as a religious person the response was answered in the affirmative by 97 percent of the group.

Specific questions regarding the person of Jesus Christ added confirmation that their basic religious teachings were grounded in the Judeo-Christian faith. When asked who Jesus was 76 percent responded by saying that he was the Son of God. Eighty-one percent affirmed that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he died on the cross, was raised from the dead, forgives people's sins, died to save people from their sins, that he paid for our sins with his death, and that he gives eternal life to those who believe in him. Eighty-two percent feel that it is important to be a member of a church and to hold to the traditions of that church.

By studying the questionnaire it becomes evident that this group understands that to be religious one would live according to the traditions of the church, in their case, the Catholic church. It has already been noted that 97 percent of the group participants consider themselves to be religious. When asked specifically if they regularly keep the traditions of the church, their response was fairly consistent with their expectations of a religious person. They did however indicate that their church attendance was not what it should be for a religious person with 31 percent responding that a religious person maintains an exceptional attendance record while only 13 percent of the participants try to keep this standard. Also, the questionnaire showed that the participants were not faithful in reading daily from the Bible. Responses indicated that 41 percent of

the participants believe that good Bible reading habits are necessary for one to be religious. Only 15 percent of the participants indicated that they live up to these standards.

In conclusion, the questionnaire demonstrated the majority of the group held to basic traditional concepts of Christianity and that they had a clear understanding of what it means to be religious. Knowing their background and having spent one week talking with them, it was clear that they were influenced by the Catholic church. It was helpful to know this information prior to beginning the seminar. The pre-questionnaire helped both me and the group leaders to understand better who the seminar participants were, how recent experiences have shaped their thinking about themselves and those around them, and how their traditional Christian views can be an asset in leading the group through the biblical material. At the conclusion of the seminar, the post-questionnaire was completed. At that time a comparison of the pre and post-questionnaire was possible, giving insight into the changes the seminar had on the participants' understanding of both forgiveness and reconciliation. Here is a summary of those findings.

The Participants' Understanding of Forgiveness

The participants were asked to respond to fourteen statements about forgiveness. Each statement had five possible responses (1) completely agree, (2) somewhat agree, (3) do not know, (4) somewhat disagree, (5) completely disagree. For reporting purposes, these responses were condensed into three basic headings: (1) agree, (2) do not know, and (3) disagree. (The "*" delineates those responses which should show a positive change indicating agreement with that which was taught in the seminar.) Here is a summary of the questions and their responses.

Response 1: Before I can forgive someone for doing something bad to me, they must come and ask for forgiveness.

	<u>Response % in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	50	31
Don't know	11	15
Disagree	39	54*

Findings: This statement sought to determine the participants' understanding of the origin of forgiveness. There was demonstration of the understanding of the biblical material as 54 percent of the group confirmed in the post-questionnaire that forgiveness begins with the person wronged, not with the perpetrator as compared to 39 percent initially. This material helped them see the parallel between God initiating the forgiveness process with lost humanity in the same way in which they should be willing to initiate forgiveness to those who have wronged them.

Response 2: Before I can forgive someone for doing something bad to me, they must pay for their mistake.

	<u>Response % in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	29	28
Don't know	22	6
Disagree	49	66*

Findings: This statement sought to understand the participants' opinion concerning retribution for damages as a prerequisite or priority before forgiveness can be extended to the perpetrator. Forty-nine percent of the respondents disagreed with this statement believing that it was not necessary for someone to pay for their mistake before forgiveness could be offered by the one wronged. After processing the lecture material, 66 percent of the participants disagreed with the statement.

Response 3: Forgiveness can only be given after justice has been received for a wrong which has been committed.

<u>Response</u>	<u>% in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	52	54*
Don't know	24	10
Disagree	24	36

Findings: This statement solicited from the respondents their understanding of the requirement of justice being satisfied for wrong-doing prior to forgiveness taking place. In the pre and post-questionnaire, there was no significant change in the percentage of participants who agreed with the statement going from 52 percent to 54 percent. By comparing statements two and three, it is interesting to note that justice is more important than restitution prior to forgiveness taking place.

Response 4: It is not necessary to forgive everyone who does bad things to me.

<u>Response</u>	<u>% in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	42	26
Don't know	19	29
Disagree	39	45*

Findings: The statement sought to evaluate the participants' understanding of the scope of forgiveness. During the seminars I stressed the importance of being willing to extend forgiveness to everyone, even to those who do not seek forgiveness. The biblical model of Christ dying on the cross for all people was presented as God's example of extending forgiveness to everyone. Results to the statement indicated a movement toward the biblical model which I presented, showing a shift from 39 percent to 45 percent.

Response 5: It is easier to hate someone than to forgive them for the bad they do to me.

<u>Response</u>	<u>% in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	37	
Don't know	16	9
Disagree	47	91*

Findings: Several times during the seminar we looked at both biblical and

practical examples of forgiveness. The pre and post-questionnaire showed a shift from 47 percent to 91 percent of the participants indicating that it is better to offer forgiveness to those who have committed wrongs than to hate them. During the teaching session one of the group leaders spoke to the group about how his sister and aunt were murdered. He shared his journey from initially harboring hatred toward their murderers to a moment when he believed he could forgive them for this horrendous act against his family. He expressed how his new-found peace, based on God's love and forgiveness which was offered to him, helped him to come to this understanding of forgiveness. His testimony supported the teaching material and I believe it had a strong impact on the group.

Response 6: You should always forgive people when they do bad things to you, even if they are not sorry for what they did to you.

<u>Response</u>	<u>% in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	58	71*
Don't know	10	8
Disagree	32	21

Findings: This statement sought to understand the group's attitude toward forgiving people who do not express sorrow for their wrong. The pre-questionnaire showed that the majority of the group (58%) believed that this was the right thing to do. After hearing the teaching material reinforce this idea, the group response increased to 71 percent.

Response 7: You should always forgive people when they do bad things to you, even if they do not ask you for forgiveness.

<u>Response</u>	<u>% in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	52	64*
Don't know	16	8
Disagree	32	28

Findings: This statement sought to understand the group's attitude toward forgiving people who do not seek forgiveness from those they wrong. The pre-questionnaire showed that 52 percent believed this was the right thing to do. The

teaching material attempted to show that forgiveness can be granted to all people, even those who do not seek forgiveness. Affirming that forgiveness is an attitude of the one wronged, not the perpetrator, the material used several biblical illustrations supporting this concept. The post-questionnaire indicated that 64 percent of the participants agreed to this attitude of forgiveness.

Response 8: You should always forgive people when they do bad things to you, even if you do not know who wronged you.

	<u>Response % in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	52	68*
Don't know	24	19
Disagree	24	13

Findings: This statement sought to understand the group's attitude toward having a forgiving spirit toward everyone, even those whose identity is unknown. The pre-questionnaire showed that 52 percent of the group believed that this was the right thing to do. After hearing the teaching material reinforce this idea, the group response increased to 68 percent.

Response 9: Not forgiving someone can lead to physical problems.

	<u>Response % in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	79	79*
Don't know	8	16
Disagree	13	5

Findings: This statement sought to understand the participants' acknowledgment of the correlation between having a forgiving attitude and good physical health. The seminar taught how an unforgiving attitude and harboring hatred toward others can lead to physical problems. The group response of 79 percent in the pre-questionnaire showed no change in the post-questionnaire.

Response 10: Not forgiving someone can lead to psychological problems.

	<u>Response % in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	71	92*
Don't know	21	5
Disagree	8	3

Findings: This statement sought to understand the participants' acknowledgment of the correlation between having a forgiving attitude and good psychological health. The response to this statement was overwhelmingly affirmative. The belief that an unforgiving attitude can lead to psychological problems went from 71 percent to 92 percent. The seminar stressed how forgiveness can play a significant part in one's spiritual and psychological health.

Response 11: By forgiving people when they do something wrong to you, you can feel better about yourself.

	<u>Response % in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	87	81*
Don't know	8	11
Disagree	5	8

Findings: The responses to this statement did not come out as one would have expected. The pre-questionnaire showed 87 percent of the group agreeing that you feel better about yourself when you forgive others. The post-questionnaire revealed a slight decrease to 81 percent in agreement. This negative shift may indicate that the question was not understood as written.

Response 12: Revenge is better than offering forgiveness.

	<u>Response % in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	5	5
Don't know	13	5
Disagree	82	90*

Findings: This statement sought to understand the group's perception of revenge as an option over forgiveness. The pre-questionnaire showed that a strong majority did not believe that revenge was the better option. In agreement with

that which was taught in the seminar, the groups response to this statement increased slightly to 90 percent in the post-questionnaire.

Response 13: Hating is better than forgiving.

	<u>Response % in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	6	0
Don't know	17	8
Disagree	77	92*

Findings: This statement sought to understand the group's perception of hate as the better option over forgiveness. The pre-questionnaire showed that 77 percent of the group did not believe that hate was better than forgiveness. In agreement with the teaching material, the group's response to this statement increased to 92 percent in the post-questionnaire.

Response 14: When someone does something bad to me, I must do something bad to them to pay them back for their wrong.

	<u>Response % in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	16	0
Don't know	5	3
Disagree	79	97*

Findings: This statement was intended to make the concept of revenge more personal and to reveal it as a clearly destructive attitude toward others. The questionnaires showed a significant increase in the groups affirmation of the teaching material. An increase from 79 percent to 97 percent of the respondents affirmed that revenge was not a positive and productive way of dealing with those who have committed wrongs against them.

Knowing the history of this part of the world, it would not be surprising to see revenge as the most common way of dealing with conflict. As has been demonstrated in chapter three, the vicious cycle of revenge has been repeated time and time again as the human response to settling past grievances. Responses to the questionnaire in this section showed a positive acceptance of the teaching

material and that the majority of the group had a healthy biblical attitude toward forgiveness when the seminar concluded.

The Participants' Understanding of Reconciliation

The term reconciliation is not commonly used in the daily language of the Croatian people. The meaning of reconciliation is bound up with the idea of forgiveness. For this reason, it is very difficult to distinguish between these words. During the translation phase of the material, it was not easy to decide on the best word or phrase for reconciliation. Because of the nature of this phrase and because of its limited use in society, six basic responses were asked inquiring into the respondents' understanding of reconciliation. Many of the statements are similar to those which appear in the section under forgiveness. They were reworded in a way which tied them more specifically with reconciliation as the end results of forgiveness. Here is a summary of the questions and their responses.

Response 1: It is easier to hate someone when they do bad things to me than to make the relationship better by trying to solve our problems.

<u>Response</u>	<u>% in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	37	21
Don't know	11	16
Disagree	52	63*

Findings: This statement focused on the relationship between two estranged persons. Two options exist in this situation. One is to allow hate to keep the parties divided, the other is to focus on the renewal of the relationship, or reconciliation. The teaching material had a positive influence on the group, affirmed by a rise from 52 percent to 63 percent in the post-questionnaire.

Response 2: It is not necessary to live at peace with all people.

<u>Response</u>	<u>% in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	41	46
Don't know	14	5
Disagree	45	49*

Findings: This statement focused on the need for people to live in peace with others. Forty one percent of the group agreed with the statement in the pre-questionnaire and only five percent of the group shifted their response in a positive way to this statement after hearing the teaching material.

Response 3: I can never be reconciled to someone who has wronged me until justice is satisfied and the wrong is made right.

<u>Response</u>	<u>% in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	31	33
Don't know	31	15
Disagree	38	52*

Findings: Response three sought to understand the group's attitude toward extending forgiveness to a perpetrator in a situation where the criminal was not punished for the crime committed. In the pre-questionnaire 38 percent of the group responded by indicating that reconciliation in a relationship did not depend upon the just correction of the wrong. The post-questionnaire showed an increase in this response up to 52 percent. This increase reflected a positive understanding of the material. The post seminar response showed an openness to forgive and reconcile, even toward a recalcitrant perpetrator.

Response 4: When people wrong me, they must be the first to seek forgiveness and to ask for reconciliation in our relationship.

<u>Response</u>	<u>% in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	43	41
Don't know	16	3
Disagree	41	56*

Findings: The teaching material tried to show that forgiveness leading toward reconciliation can be extended to a perpetrator at the initiation of the one wronged. The questionnaires showed a shift in the group's response to this

statement from 41 percent to 56 percent indicating that forgiveness and reconciliation can be initiated by the victim. This indicates a positive shift in the group's understanding of the material.

Response 5: God wants all people to live together in harmony and peace.

<u>Response</u>	<u>% in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	94	100*
Don't know	3	0
Disagree	3	0

Findings: This statement is similar to response number two yet it received a very different response. In this statement, God is the subject who desires that everyone live in peace and harmony. In their responses, the group affirmed that living in peace and harmony with all people is God's desire. The pre-questionnaire showed that 94 percent of the group agreed with this statement and the post-questionnaire showed that 100 percent of the group embraced this opinion after hearing the teaching material.

Response 6: Jesus died to reconcile God to all people in the world.

<u>Response</u>	<u>% in Pre-Quest.</u>	<u>% in Post-Quest.</u>
Agree	86	100*
Don't know	14	0
Disagree	0	0

Findings: The final question in this section attempted to establish their understanding of the biblical teaching that Jesus died so that lost humanity could be reconciled to God. In the pre-questionnaire, 86 percent of the group affirmed that this was true and in the post-questionnaire 100 percent of the group affirmed this statement.

In concluding this section, it should be noted that forgiveness and reconciliation are concepts which are linguistically and culturally intertwined. Trying to separate the dynamics of these two concepts was one of the main goals of the teaching material. The teaching material consistently emphasized that

forgiveness and reconciliation are not identical but that each are to be understood as being unique. Forgiveness is an act of the person wronged that can be extended or withheld. Reconciliation cannot be complete until forgiveness is granted. God extended forgiveness to the world through the death of Christ. Only by accepting this forgiveness and repenting for one's wrongs against God can a lost person be reconciled to God. As God initiated this process with us, we must in turn initiate the process of forgiveness and reconciliation with others. Understanding this biblical truth is the first step towards having a healthy attitude when one is hurt or wronged by others. The implementation of these concepts into one's life is a second and much more difficult step.

The Participants' Personal Evaluation of the Seminar

The post-questionnaire contained thirteen statements which sought to gain a subjective evaluation of the effect the seminar had on the participants. The answers to this self evaluation were a simple yes or no. Listed below are ten of the thirteen statements which received an affirmative answer from more than 90 percent of the participants:

- (1) This seminar has helped me to better understand the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation with those who have hurt or wronged me.
- (2) I believe as the Bible teaches that God has forgiven everyone of their sins.
- (3) I believe that God has forgiven me of my sins.
- (4) I believe as the Bible teaches that forgiveness for those who have wronged me is a sign that I have received forgiveness from God.
- (5) I believe that the Bible says that to be a Christian I must accept God's forgiveness and that I must forgive others.
- (6) I believe with my mind that it is necessary to forgive everyone.
- (8) I would like to be able to believe in my heart what I have learned this week.
- (10) This seminar has helped me to understand how to believe in my heart what I have learned in my mind.
- (11) I know that I am a Christian. That does not mean that I am a religious person or a good person or a member of a church. That means that I

have accepted God's sacrifice in Jesus as the forgiveness of my sins and that I have learned how to forgive others who have wronged me.

(13) I want to live in peace with all people. I know that this process will take a long time but I will be able to do this with God's help.

Special mention should be made of the responses to statements seven, eight and twelve. Statement seven (I believe with my heart that it is necessary to forgive everyone) and statement eight (It is hard for me to believe in my heart what I have come to know in my mind) both received 71 percent of the groups agreement. These statements sought to evaluate the group's ability to distinguish between the concept of forgiveness in the mind and the act of forgiveness in the heart.

Statement twelve reads: "After this seminar, I feel for the first time that God really loves me and that I can go to heaven. I have prayed to God to accept me and I now have peace with God." One of the goals of the project was to give each group participant a chance to hear clearly the gospel message and to respond to that message. Since it is not customary for churches to give public invitations as we are accustomed to in Baptist churches in the United States, invitations are given in more private ways which allow the respondents to reflect on their decision and to make it public to the church's pastor or a lay leader. For this reason it was decided to include this question in the evaluation and to publicly encourage the participants to make this decision known to the spiritual leader in their group. Eighty five percent of the participants responded that this seminar allowed them for the first time to know that God loves them and that they can go to heaven. It further affirmed that they have prayed to God for salvation, that he accepts them, and that they have peace in their lives knowing and affirming these things. This was the primary goal of the seminar and it is a great encouragement to know that 85 percent of the group accepted the gospel message.

An Evaluation of the Ministry Tools

On Saturday, March 30, 1996 immediately following the completion of the post seminar questionnaire, and on Sunday, April 14, 1996 I meet with the leaders of the small group sessions. During this group session we critiqued the seminar focusing on the following integral parts of the seminar: the pre and post-questionnaire, the session material and the participant small group sessions. Here is an overview of the critique of these integral tools of the seminar followed by suggestions and revisions.

An Evaluation of the Pre and Post-Questionnaire

The main focus of the questionnaire was to evaluate the participant's entry and exit levels of understanding forgiveness and reconciliation. Secondary foci were to gain a basic knowledge of who the participants were and to obtain a subjective evaluation of the seminar. All were in agreement that the questionnaires served these purposes but several significant changes were recommended for its future use. For example, the questionnaire was too long. It will be cut significantly in all areas except in the sections covering forgiveness and reconciliation. Several statements will be re-worded to make them more clear and understandable. The section under reconciliation will be expanded to ten questions. Responses to the statements will be reduced from five to three. More time will be spent explaining to the participants how to fill out the questionnaire. Small details, such as explaining how to circle the best answer, to check to be sure all pages have been completed and to be sure to answer all of the questions will be covered prior to completing both the pre and post-questionnaire. The questionnaires will be given to the participants at a time when they will be able to find a quiet place to fill them out. After thirty minutes, they will return them to a

designated place for collection. All of these changes should improve the questionnaires. Because they will be completed more accurately, the information gained and the data compiled on the participants will be more useful.

An Evaluation of the Session Material

The way the teaching material was presented was affirmed by all of the group leaders. It was noted that the material was presented in a manner which made it easy to follow and understand. The teaching techniques employed kept the attention of the group and presented the material in an interesting manner. Since each lesson was built upon the preceding lesson, repetition of the material from session to session made it easy for the participants to retain the basic theme of each lesson.

Some suggestions were made to enhance the teaching sessions. For example, more graphics will be used in the next seminar utilizing the overhead projector. Bible verses will be shown on the overhead projector and the Bible will be established earlier in the seminar as the basic foundation for truth upon which the seminar is built. It will not be assumed that the participants will have any knowledge of the Bible prior to the first session.

The name of the seminar will be changed from "Learning How to Forgive" to "The Road Less Traveled." The seminar will be promoted as a basic or general introductory course to the Bible. Forgiveness and reconciliation will still be the central focus of the seminar but these truths will be presented within the rubrics of the Bible story as seen in Paul's teaching in II Corinthians chapter five: "Be reconciled to God!" This new title will better advertise the overall goals of the seminar without broaching too closely the tender subject of reconciliation between political parties in the former Yugoslavia.

An Evaluation of the Participant Small Group Sessions

This was the first time that small groups were formed and utilized in this way at the Life Center. Their usefulness was affirmed by all of the leaders and it was noted that future seminars and retreats could also be benefited by the effective use of small groups. There were several suggestions which will make their further use more effective.

The small groups were too large. It was obvious from the start that nine to twelve people were too many for each group. Not knowing the group size and being short on group leaders who could commit to a full week caused problems. As it was, several groups changed leaders during the week. It is imperative that the group have consistent group leadership during the entire week in order to enhance rapport within the group.

Another perceived weakness of the small group session was the lack of preparation and attention given to each group leader. Who the group leaders would be was not confirmed until after the group arrived. This gave little time to prepare the group leaders for their task. For the next seminar, at least two to three hours should be spent in preparing group leaders in the basic dynamics of small group leadership.

It was recommended that group times be limited to one hour with each group containing four to five participants. To minimize on the problem of being short of group leaders, each leader will have two to three groups if necessary. Each participant will have a printed study guide prior to each session and the Life Center will be sure to have enough available Bibles for each participant to use during the session.

Conclusion and Summary

In considering the goals of this project as described in chapter one, it

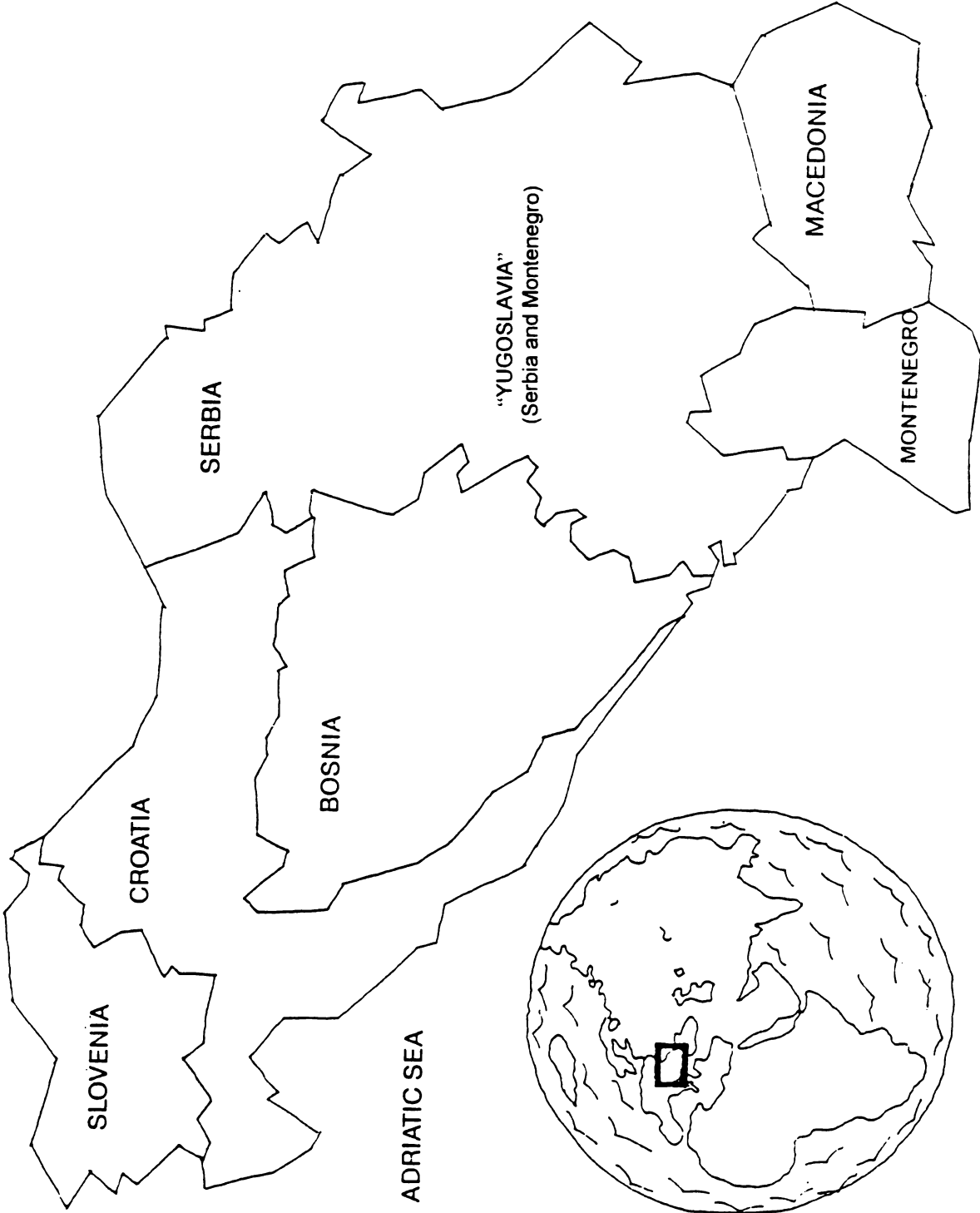
would be reasonable to say that they were all met in an acceptable way. The seven lesson teaching module focusing on forgiveness and reconciliation taught the biblical basics for one to learn how to forgive. This module was tested and was found to be effective in that it enhanced the participants' understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation as was revealed in the post-questionnaire. The seminar has been evaluated and is presently being revised and adapted as preparations are underway to teach this material to a group from Sarajevo, Bosnia in the next month.

Future Use

After the conclusion of the second running of this seminar, the material will be prepared for use by the Baptist Unions in Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia. It will be prepared in a package format for use by interested persons, groups, churches, and Unions of churches. The package will contain: (1) an introductory overview of the seminar on a video cassette, (2) English and Croatian translation of both the teaching materials and the questionnaires, (3) a VHS-Pal European format video tape containing the actual seminar being taught to the Sarajevo group.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA



APPENDIX B

LEADER STUDY GUIDES

Teaching Session I: "Life Ain't Fair"

I. "When Bad Things Happen to Good People"

Life is full of examples of bad things happening to good people. List several incidents in your life which have affected you and those people around you which would illustrate this point.

1. _____ 3. _____
2. _____ 4. _____

II. "The Biblical root of evil in the world"

A. The Expulsion From Paradise (Genesis 3:1-24) Read the passage in Genesis, chapter 3 and complete the following questions from this passage:

1. Who are the "actors" in this play?
a. _____ c. _____
b. _____ d. _____
2. What three temptations did Eve encounter?
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
3. What was the primary sin which Adam and Eve committed? (Check the one that you think best summarizes their "sin".)
____ a. They wanted to have more material possessions.
____ b. They wanted to follow the Serpent's leadership, not God's.
____ c. They wanted to be smarter.
____ d. They disobeyed God.
4. Match the punishment with the one being punished by placing a 1 (for woman), a 2 (for man), or 3 (for the serpent) beside each punishment received:
____ Became more cursed than all of the animals.
____ Work produces sweat.
____ Child birth will produce great pains.
____ This person will be ruled over by another.

- _____ The ground is cursed because of this person.
 _____ His head will be bruised.

5. Read again Genesis 3, verses 22-24. What would you say was the most harsh result of Adam and Eve's disobeying God?

B. "Cain and Abel" Read the passage in Genesis 4:1-16 and complete the following questions from this passage:

1. Who are the "actors" in this play?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
2. What was Cain's profession? _____ Abel's? _____
3. Which offering did God accept? Cain's OR Abel's
4. Cain killed Abel. When God asked Cain where Able was, what did Cain say? _____.
5. List the curses pronounced on Cain by God:
 - a. vs 11 "you are _____ from the ground"
 - b. vs 12 "you shall be a _____ and a _____."
 - c. vs 14 and 16 ...he was isolated from _____
6. How would you summarize the picture of sin which you have seen in these verses?

C. "The Flood" Read the passage in Genesis 6:5-8:22 and complete the following questions from this passage.

1. Who are the central "actors" in this play?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 2. How would you characterize the moral state of humankind at this time?
- Chapter 6, verse 5

3. God was going to destroy all of humankind until he considered the life of one man who was named _____.

4. True or false? God saved Noah and his family even though there was wickedness in his family? Read chapter 8, verse 21. God acknowledges that the intent of man's heart is _____ from his youth.

5. How would you describe the basic sin of humanity which led to God bringing a flood upon the earth?

D. "The Tower of Babel" Read the passage in Genesis 11:1-9 and complete the following questions from this passage:

1. Who are the central "actors" in this play?

a. _____

b. _____

2. Does the Bible say that these people sinned against God? YES NO

3. If yes, how did they sin against God? _____

4. Looking at the "sin" described in this chapter of Genesis, one might consider it to be a potential sin or problem for mankind if too much power or control were gained by one united people in the controlling government. Can you list some examples of how a powerful government or political head can become a sinful situation?

a. Fidel Castro's rule in Cuba

c. _____

b. _____

d. _____

III. "Results of sin"

A. Adam and Eve were driven out of their home as a result of their transgression against God. It would be natural for them to think this to be harsh and unfair. When they were accused of disobeying God, they began to blame others for their actions. The result of this sin is that we are guilty of disobeying God and are always looking to blame others for our shortcomings.

B. Cain and Abel were divided in their love for each other. They became competitive toward one another. Their desire to be accepted by others led to a competitive rivalry. Cain, determined to win at all costs, removed the competition by killing Abel. The result of this sin is that we look at others with envy and hate because we do not think they are as good as we are. Or perhaps we look at others with envy because we do not think we are as good as they are.

C. The Flood was God's judgment upon humankind because of all of the wickedness which people commit against themselves and God.

D. The Tower of Babel represents humankind's efforts to out smart God. When a group of people get together to force a rule or system of government on others, most of the people are the ruled, not the rulers. In most situations, the ruled are treat harshly and unfairly to the advantage of the ones in power.

Teaching Session II: "There Must Be a Better Way"

I. Review

A. Use varieties of the word "disobey" to complete the following sentences.

1. Sin entered into the world because people _____ God.
2. They chose to do what they wanted to do and this resulted in a _____ spirit.
3. Their _____ showed God that they thought they could run their own lives better than God could.
4. As a result of their being _____, Sin entered into the world and effected every area of their lives.
5. Because of their _____, we experience the results of sin in every area of our lives.

B. List the four areas of life which were effected because of the sins committed in Genesis chapters 1-11:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

C. Match the scripture references in Genesis with the New Testament example of how God overcame these four areas of sin:

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Jesus is the second Adam | _____ Genesis 4:1-16 |
| 2. Love toward our brothers | _____ Genesis 11:1-9 |
| 3. Water symbolizes a renewal or cleansing | _____ Genesis 3:1-24 |
| 4. One language = reconciliation for the world | _____ Genesis 6-8 |

D. Conclusion: When people disobeyed God, God was offended. People were the offenders. A wall was constructed between mankind and God and there would be no reconciliation until this wall could be broken down. Forgiveness was the only way for the wall to be broken down. In this case _____ would have to forgive _____. When we have hatred or anger toward our neighbors, friends, family, or even those who we do not know but who have wronged us, we have two options:

1. Hold a grudge.
2. Extend forgiveness.

If we choose to hold a grudge, the cycle of anger and hate will continue indefinitely. If we choose to break the cycle and to forgive the person who

wronged us then we can move toward reconciliation in our relationships. This is what God chose to do when he was wronged by mankind. Lets see what He did.

II. "Abraham and Isaac: A picture of atonement."

A. Read Genesis 22 and answer the following questions.

1. When God called Abraham he responded by saying "Here I am." This shows that he was being _____ to God. (22:1)
2. When Abraham and Isaac went up on the mountain, Isaac saw the fire and the wood but did not see a _____. (22:7)
3. Abraham answered Isaac when he asked about the lamb for the sacrifice that _____ would provide what was needed for the sacrifice. (22:8)
4. What was sacrificed that day? _____ (22:13)

B. If we take apart the word atonement what three "words" can we make?

____ - ____ - _____

C. When we commit a sin against someone, before we can be "at one" with this person, we must make restitution for our sin. Sometimes this means that we must pay back in full what was taken or destroyed. Sometimes this is not possible because of the nature of our sin. Nevertheless, no matter what our sin is or if it is possible to make complete restitution, we can show by our deep sorrow that we regret what we have done. Sometimes, this sorrow can in some small way "pay" for what we have done.

In this story of Abraham and Isaac did Abraham pay for his sins? yes no

If no, who paid for the sin? _____ What was the cost of this sacrifice? _____

D. What was it that Abraham did that was most important in this story?

III. It was God's decision that before forgiveness was given for sins, there must be a sign of sorrow offered by the sinner. Therefore, a sacrifice would be offered as a sign of the sorrow which one must have before reconciliation can take place. This process of atonement and forgiveness and reconciliation in the Old Testament is called the "Law".

A. Read Exodus, chapter 20 and answer the following questions:

1. Moses returned from the mountain top and God gave him the _____.

2. How many “commandments” did God give to Moses to give to the people? _____

B. Find Leviticus 27:34 and read it. It says: “...these are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the sons of Israel at Mount Sinai.” Do you think that this refers to: (mark only one)

_____ just the 10 commandments

_____ all of the commandments, statutes and ordinances God gave to His people in Exodus and Leviticus

C. God gave the Jews (Israelites) a set of rules and regulations to live by in the Law. If they obeyed all of the laws, they were righteous and in good relations with God. If and when they disobeyed the laws, God was angry with them and the “wall” was built up between them. This meant that it was time for a sacrifice to be made to God for an “Atonement” for their sins. The atonement for sins allowed God to forgive them of their sins. To understand this better, read the following verses.

Leviticus 4:20

Leviticus 5:10

Leviticus 6:7

D. Living under the Law of God in the Old Testament was easy. You knew what to do and when you did it wrong, you knew how to make it right with God. If your life showed your honest attempt to obey the Law, you would prosper. If you chose to disobey the Law, you would be punished by God. Read the following verses to understand this simple system.

Deuteronomy 4:40

Deuteronomy 6:1-2

Deuteronomy 28:58-62

III. This simple practice of “obey - disobey” and “sin - sacrifice” applied to individuals every time they sinned, and to the nation of Israel as one group. Once a year, all of the nation of Israel received forgiveness at one moment on the “Day of Atonement”.

A. Read Leviticus chapter 16 and answer the following questions:

1. In the first few verses, who was it that was to make this special sacrifice?

2. Aaron was to use two _____ for the sacrifice.

3. One goat was killed the other was released into the desert. The one released into the desert has been called a _____ goat. In modern day

slang this term describes someone who takes a “fall” in the place of someone else.

4. In verse 21 we see three words describing the burden which was placed on the goat. These words are:

5. In verse 21, before the three words you wrote in question 4, the Bible uses a small three letter word to describe how many of these “things” were placed on the goat. That word is _____

6. Read verse 34 at the conclusion of this chapter. This practice was to take place every _____ for the nation of _____ to have _____ of their sins atoned for by God.

B. People offend God by their sins which they commit. God, in His mercy provides a sacrifice to make payment or restitution for these sins. This was done in the Law both for the individual and for the nation of Israel. Obedience to this legal system meant the difference between prosperity and failure. God did not have to provide this mercy. He did it because He choose to do it out of His love for His creation.

C. Do you remember that Abraham told Isaac that God would provide a lamb for a sacrifice that day on top of the mountain? Yes, he did say that to Isaac. Did Abraham sacrifice a lamb that day? No, he did not.

1. What did Abraham sacrifice that day? A _____

2. What is the difference between this sacrifice and that of a lamb?

IV. “The Dynamics of sin and forgiveness”

A. When we sin against God or one another there are three distinctions which must be understood:

1. Atonement focuses on the sin which was committed and on the restitution for that sin.

2. Forgiveness focuses on the one who was wronged or against whom the sin was committed.

3. Reconciliation focuses on the one who has sinned and who is outside of the realm of fellowship with the one who was wronged. The goal of reconciliation is to bring this person back into the “fold” with the one wronged.

B. Match the words below with the three distinct aspects of this lesson on atonement, forgiveness and reconciliation, by placing a 1, 2, or 3 by each word. We will discuss the answers during the group time.

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Atonement | _____ acceptance | _____ offended one |
| 2. Forgiveness | _____ fellowship | _____ offender |
| 3. Reconciliation | _____ grace | _____ offense |
| | _____ law | _____ offered |
| | _____ mercy | _____ payment |
| | _____ provided for | _____ restitution |
| | _____ received | _____ result |
| | _____ numerated | |

V. Conclusion:

God hates sin. He hates it because it hurts His creation. Every sin which we can name hurts either ourselves, our fellow human being, or the world. Match the following examples of sin with the best example of that which is effected most directly by the sin:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------|
| 1. alcoholism | _____ self |
| 2. gossip | _____ other |
| 3. litter | _____ Earth |
| 4. over-eating | _____ self |
| 5. adultery | _____ other |
| 6. pollution | _____ Earth |

God does not hate sin just because it is sin but because it destroys, inflicts pain, damages reputations, scares His creation, and is unjust to others. These are good reasons to hate sin. We should hate sin for the same reasons. Reflect on your life and on things that have happened to you. How can you summarize your life. Have you been a perfect example of justice and righteousness or have you to been guilty of committing injustices against yourself, others, and the Earth? Summarize this conclusion in a few sentences describing how you view sin.

Teaching Session III: “The Sins of a Great King”

I. Review

A. God hates sin.

1. He hates it because it _____ His creation.
2. Every sin which is committed hurts either the _____, _____, or _____.
3. We should hate sin because _____.

B. Sin must be covered or “paid for” before there can be forgiveness and reconciliation.

C. The “dynamics” of sin and forgiveness:

1. _____ focuses on the sin which was committed and on restitution for that sin.
2. _____ focuses on the one who was wronged or against whom the sin was committed.
3. _____ focuses on the sinner and the one wronged with the goal of restoration.

D. In the Old Testament, God provided for atonement, forgiveness, and reconciliation through the _____.

II. “King David’s Great Sin” Read 2 Samuel, chapter 11 and answer the following questions.

A. People often sin when they are not doing what they are supposed to do.

1. (vs 1) Spring was a time when the Kings went out to battle. What did David do?

2. (vs 2) When David should have been _____, he was _____

3. (vs 3-4) David followed after his spirit or his flesh? _____

B. Sin has a way of surfacing into the light. In David's case, how was his sin made apparent? (vs 5) _____

C. One's first reaction when a sin is identified is to cover it up. How did David try to cover his sin?

1. (vs 6) David asked _____ to bring _____ from the battle field.

2. (vs 8) David sent Uriah a _____

3. (vs 13) David provided a _____ for Uriah.

4. Why did David bring Uriah back from the battle field? _____

D. David's subtle attempts to get Uriah to sleep with Bathsheba failed. What was his final course of action? (vs 14-21) _____

E. (vs 22-25) Did David succeed in his plan? YES NO

F. (vs 26) Why did David marry Bathsheba? _____

III. "King David's Great Sin Revealed" Read 2 Samuel 12: 1-13 and answer the following questions.

A. (vs 1) Who did God send to confront David? _____

B. (vs 1-4) match the following:

1 Rich man	_____ Bathsheba
2 Poor man	_____ David
3 Ewe lamb	_____ Uriah

C. (vs 5-6) David determined that the "rich man" deserved to _____ and that he should make _____ for his sin.

D. (vs 7-9) Nathan confronted _____ as being the rich man.

IV. "The Consequences of David's Great Sin" Read 2 Samuel 11:10-23. Answer the following questions.

A. List the consequences of David's sin as you understand them from this passage and previous ones:

B. Did David recognize his sins? yes no

V. "A Contrite Sinner's Prayer for Pardon" Read Psalm 51 and answer the following questions.

A. It is believed that King David wrote Psalm 51 to express his inner most feelings about the sin which he committed against Bathsheba and Uriah. Throughout this Psalm, David talks about his "wrong doing". What are the different words does he use to describe what he has done?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

B. What are some of the different expressions David uses to describe the way in which God could "cleanse" him from his sin?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

C. We have already discussed these three words: atonement, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Briefly describe how you understand these words in the context of Psalm 51.

1. Atonement: _____

2. Forgiveness: _____

3. Reconciliation: _____

D. What evidence did David show that he was sorry for his sins? _____

E. Did David confess to God his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah? yes no

VI. Conclusion:

David was a great king over the People of Israel. He had the power to do as he pleased and was not accountable to the people for his actions. During the history of Israel, many kings were good and many were very bad in the way they treated the people and revered God. David recognized his sin against God but did not recognize his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. In Psalm 51 verse 4 he says that he has only sinned against God. How can you explain this? This will be a central focus of our discussion when we meet next time. Record your comments below.

Teaching Session IV: “Understanding Forgiveness”

I. Review

A. King David committed a great sin as we learned last week in Session III. As we have learned from reading Psalm 51, David confessed his sin against God and God alone. In this Psalm, he did not confess to committing a sin against Bathsheba or Uriah. As we consider the magnitude of this sin which David committed, against whom did he commit this offense? Make a list of the people affected by this great sin:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

B. Why do you think David did not mention that he sinned against some of those mentioned above, but only acknowledged his sin against God?

C. In Psalm 51 we find many different words referring to what David did wrong. Here is a repeat of some of those words and a short definition of the meaning of the word:

Sin: This is a general term for those things which we think, ponder over and/or commit. The term “sin” describes how God sees what we do or think. Sin is a value judgment placed on us by God, from His perspective. It does not always mean that a law has been broken. For example, to some Christians smoking is always a sin even if it is not against the law. In other situations, a “sin” committed is always sin and it is so judged wrong by the law of the country. An example of this is murder. Murder by definition is unlawful killing, hated by both God and the people of all societies. So in summation, sin is the word describing an act against God. The word sin in a variety of usages occur nearly 750 times in the Old and New Testaments.

Transgression: This word describes the individual offenses one would make against God by disobeying His commandments. If God gives His people a commandment to follow and it is disobeyed, a transgression is committed. People transgress against God’s LAW, not usually against God. This word is used in various forms in the Old Testament about 100 times. It is used in the New Testament less than 10 times, usually referring to a transgression against the Law of God as it was understood in the Old Testament.

Iniquities: This word is used in the Old Testament over 250 times and in the New Testament only 10 times. It is a general word which refers to the things which we

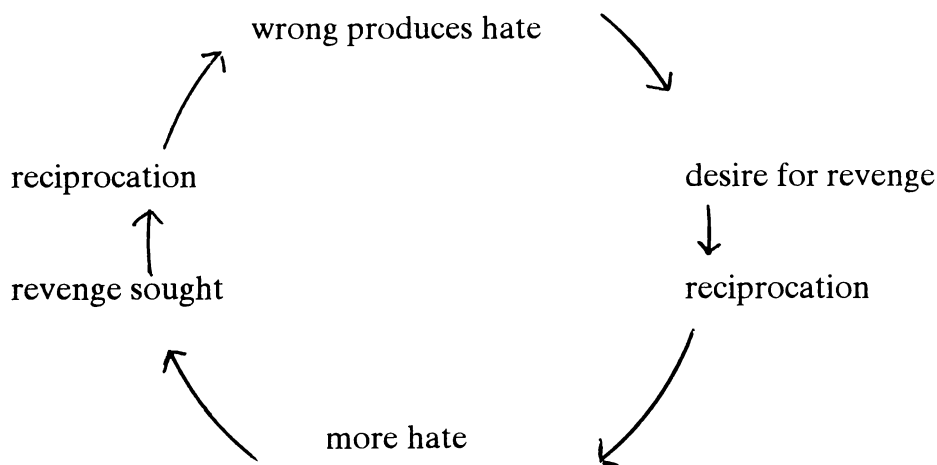
do which are offensive to God. Other words used to describe “iniquity” are evil, wickedness, darkness, sin, corruption, and depravity. This is a bleak word used mainly in religious thought, not in society as a whole. The word is used most frequently as a noun meaning “my iniquities”, “your iniquities”, or “his iniquities”. It refers to those things committed against God, others, and society as a whole. It can also refer to sins committed against nature.

Evil: This is another general term referring to iniquities but it is a more general term describing the results of iniquities or sin. Evil becomes the source of sins committed. Evil is understood to be a force which opposes good. Satan is considered to be the Prince of evil. The source of evil is traced back to Genesis chapters 1-11 as we have learned in our first lesson. The Serpent was present in the Garden of Eden and is blamed for bringing evil into the world. But we must remember, Adam and Eve chose to listen to the Serpent and to act out of their free choice.

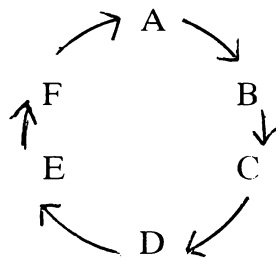
Bloodguiltiness: This word is not a common word but is used to describe the results of evil and sin. If you read Genesis chapter 4, verse 10 you will see that the blood of Abel, Cain’s brother, was crying out to God from the ground. The spilling of blood brings with it a guilt which the murderer bears. Only in extreme situations will a murderer not have guilt after committing a murder.

Lawlessness: Another word to be considered is lawlessness. This is a term which describes the general state or condition of a society which does not follow God. A synonym for this word is chaos. This word means that there is no respect for the law. Usually, in the Bible, this refers to God’s Law, not the law of society.

D. When acts of evil are committed against you, things began to happen which set off a process of events which develop into a method for dealing with your problems and with those who cause you problems. Usually it is a negative reaction which is natural because of “sin”. Here is an example of the wrong way to process these events:



E. There is a better way of processing your feelings and hurts when things happen to you. Here is a diagram of how these feelings can be processed:



A= Forgiveness granted
 B= Forgiveness received
 C= Reconciliation
 D= Forgiveness granted to others
 E= Forgiveness received by others
 F= An epidemic of reconciliation

F. To break the cycle of sin, hate and revenge we need to understand the meaning of forgiveness and the dynamics of forgiveness. This is best understood when we have received forgiveness for something we have done. The greater forgiveness we have received, the greater forgiveness we will be able to give others.

II. The following illustration will be used to discuss the multiple dimensions of forgiveness and reconciliation:

A. The Story:

Two girls are raped by 5 school boys in a school bathroom. Since the five boys wore masks, it is uncertain who they are. No one is prosecuted. One of the two girls raped, lets call her Susan, after many years of emotional turmoil, decides to forgive these men and to resolve her anger. Over the years it has been speculated who the boys were because news travels fast in a small town. Susan learns who the boys were who committed this heinous act against her as does her friend, Sally. Many years have passed since the event took place. Susan looks for them to offer them her forgiveness. She resolves the pain she has in her heart and lives a happy life. But for Sally, life is different. She keeps her anger and hatred for these 5 boys all of her life. Sally dies with this hatred in her heart. Her life was full of pain and emotional turmoil.

B. Lets see what happened when Susan looked for these 5 “boys” who long ago did this terrible thing to her. She sets out on her journey to find them.

The first man found is an alcoholic. For years he has tried to erase the memory of his act against her by drinking. He accepts her forgiveness and their relationship is reconciled. He seeks forgiveness from the other girl but is denied it because of her bitterness.

The second man found is in prison for assault and rape. He has committed this act against 32 other women over a period of several years. He laughs at her for coming to see him and threatens to do it again when he is released. He has no remorse for his actions. There is no reconciliation between the two however, the girl finds peace in what she has done.

The third man is a prominent business man in the community. He refuses to accept her forgiveness because he claims he did not rape her. He lives on in his silent misery and shame while she goes away content that she offered him forgiveness.

The fourth man died some time back in an automobile accident. Susan is sad that she can not tell him that he is forgiven.

The fifth man committed suicide shortly after the act against this woman. He could not live with himself. This is hard for the woman to understand since she bore the grief and pain of the act, not him.

B. The Results: All five of these men processed this sin differently. That was their choice. Both Susan and Sally processed this vile act against them in different ways. This was their choice also.

1. What was the ideal way of handling this sin:

The woman named “ _____ ”
the _____ man _____

2. What was the worst case scenario which could have happened?

The woman named “ _____ ”
the _____ man _____

C. The Lessons:

1. In every act of evil committed against people or “parties” we have the following considerations:

- a. atonement (or restitution)
- b. forgiveness
- c. reconciliation

2. In our illustration how do these considerations fit?

- a. Who would need to make atonement or restitution for these crimes? _____
- b. How would this be possible? _____
- c. Who would grant forgiveness in this situation? _____
- d. How could reconciliation take place in this illustration? _____

III. “The Dynamics of this Illustration”

A. Atonement or restitution was never made for this crime. The boys went unpunished as do many in our society. In spite of this fact, the lives of both the perpetrators and the victims must continue. Restitution or the lack of it will greatly effect the lives of the victims.

B. Forgiveness has many different aspects and its properties are very different when it is looked at from different angles. Even when there is no restitution for a crime, forgiveness can be offered to the perpetrators. This is not common in the world today. Many people harbor feelings of hate and anger against those who have wronged them for many years. Even Christians are guilty of holding grudges and not forgiving others. Try and use our illustration to give an example of the following:

1. Forgiveness can be granted but not received. _____

2. Forgiveness can be withheld. _____

3. Forgiveness can be sought but not given. _____

C. Reconciliation can only come when there is forgiveness. Reconciliation can only take place when the victim forgives the perpetrator and when the perpetrator expresses sorrow for the act committed and shows a desire to be reconciled with the person against whom the sin was committed. As we will see in the New Testament, this is the goal of God for His creation. God wants sinful humankind to be reconciled to Him and wants individuals to be reconciled to one another. This is the heart of the message of the Gospel. Our next lessons will develop this teaching in the New Testament. As you prepare for this next lesson, list a few Bible scriptures which come to mind when you think about forgiveness and reconciliation:

_____ _____
_____ _____

Teaching Session V: “The New Covenant”

I. Review:

A. From Session I: Bad things happen to _____ people. This is because of sin which entered into the world as we have learned in Genesis, chapters 1-11. Sin is defined as disobedience to God. We see the effects of sin in our society because people disobeyed God. Sin is a bad thing and the effects of sin are also bad. One of the results of sin is that it is common for us to blame others for our mistakes and sins against God. Also, when others wrong us, we dwell on blaming them more than on solving the problem. As we blame others for wrongs committed against us, we build up walls of resentment against these people. This means that when we sin, AND when others sin against us, there is always going to be the opportunity for either “forgiveness and reconciliation” or “resentment and alienation.” It is our choice how we deal with these problems.

B. From Session II: In the beginning, God was offended when _____ and _____ first sinned against Him. Because of this sin against God, a wall was constructed between the sinner and God. This wall has two sides. One faces God, the other faces the wrong-doer. For God to have a relationship with sinful humankind, the wall would have to be destroyed from both sides. For God to destroy the barrier of sin which was committed against Him by sinful humankind, “atonement” would have to be made for the sin. This would make humankind at - one - ment with God. God instituted the Law to cleanse people from their sins against Him.

C. From Session III: We read in Psalm _____ about King David’s prayer of repentance. We learned how David showed great sorrow and repentance because he sinned against God. He asked God to blot out his transgressions and to make him white as snow. David wanted God to forgive him for his sins. We know that David also wronged Bathsheba and Uriah but in this Psalm, David focused on his sin against God, not his wrong against Bathsheba and Uriah. David was concerned with getting his relationship with God straight through confession and repentance. His desire was to be restored with God through forgiveness even though the word forgiveness is never mentioned in this Psalm.

D. From Session IV: We learned that _____ is the word generally used to describe our evil acts against God. There are many other words which describe sin such as evil, transgression, iniquities, bloodguiltiness, and lawlessness. When we do wrong against our neighbors, it is a sin against God. Sin is anything which hurts us, others, or the world. God hates sin because of the effect it has on us, others, and the world. Sin is a word used to describe evil deeds committed against ourselves, others, or the world. When bad things happen to us we have a choice to either nurture our hurt until it turns into revenge, or to break the natural fleshly cycle and to show forgiveness and love toward those who wrong us.

Reconciliation can only come when there is forgiveness. Forgiveness can only be truly received when one shows repentance and sorrow for what has been done.

II. “Jesus Is the Divine Model for Forgiveness”

A. A History of Atonement:

1. In Genesis, chapter 3, God provided a sacrifice for Adam and Eve. This sacrifice became their new wardrobe. This is the first mention of blood being spilt in the world.
2. In Genesis, chapter 22, Abraham said that God would provide a sacrifice (a lamb) in place of Isaac. That day a ram was sacrificed, not a lamb.
3. Once a year in every Jewish home a lamb was sacrificed in memory of God saving the Israelites from the Angel of Death which passed over Pharaoh’s Egypt. This is called the Passover.
4. In Leviticus 16, once a year we read how a goat was sacrificed for the people’s sin while another goat was released into the desert. This second goat had placed on it all of the sins of Israel. This meant that once a year, all of the sins of the nation of Israel were released, covered, remitted, or forgiven. Unfortunately, only a second after this great forgiveness took place, the first bad thought that entered into the mind of just one Israelite caused the sin cycle to continue. This necessitated a continual sacrifice on the part of the people to God culminating in an annual offering being made on the Day of Atonement.
5. Isaiah, Chapter 53, tells us the story of the Suffering Servant who will bear the sins of Israel. Isaiah says that the Lord caused the iniquity of “us all” (the Israelites) to fall on him. We know that Jesus is the Suffering Servant.
6. John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus for the first time said: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). John was making reference to the sacrificial lamb which bore the sins of the people of Israel throughout the history of the sacrificial system in the Law of Judaism. John the Baptist was predicting that Jesus would bear the sins of the world when he died.

B. Jesus died on the cross:

1. He was the innocent sacrifice for the world. Read 1 Peter 3:18 and answer the following questions.

What does “once for all” mean? _____

Who are the “unjust”? _____

2. When Jesus looked down at the Roman soldiers who nailed Him to the cross he said:
 _____ (Luke 23:34)

3. The last words Jesus spoke before He died on the cross as recorded in John 19:30 are:

4. What did Jesus mean when He said “It is finished”? _____

C. When Jesus died on the cross, the Bible says that the curtain of the temple was torn from the top to the bottom (read Mt. 27:51). This curtain separated humanity from the holy presence of God. What was the significance of the curtain being torn and why is it important that it was torn from the top to the bottom?

III. “Jesus Represents the New Covenant”

A. Jeremiah promised that God would give a New Covenant to the people of Israel. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and answer the following questions:

1. When did God make the first covenant with Israel? _____

2. The covenant which Moses brought down from the mountain focused on the _____

3. God will write the new law on the _____ of His people and He will live in them.

4. He will _____ their iniquity and their _____. He will not remember.

5. God promises this covenant to the house of _____ and the house of _____.

B. These same words of Jeremiah are recorded in Hebrews, chapter 8. Read Hebrews chapters 8 and 9 and answer the following questions:

1. What was the name of the first covenant God made with Israel and Judah? The "L __ W".
2. God made the first covenant _____ to replace it with a _____ covenant.
3. (9:12) Christ obtained eternal _____ with his blood sacrifice for _____.
4. A covenant (or will) becomes valid when the person who writes it _____.
5. Without the shedding of blood there is no _____ of sin.

C. The High Priest was the only priest who could go into the Holy of Holies where the presence of God dwelled. This he did one time each year. Jesus is called our High Priest. He made the ultimate sacrifice for the "world" so that the people of the world could know God. In the temple, there were no chairs. It was common knowledge that the work of the High Priest was never completed because there were always sins to be atoned for in Israel. Therefore, the sacrifices at the temple were continually made by the priests on behalf of the people. At times blood poured from the temple like water running from a faucet. In Hebrews 12:1-2 we read about the work of Jesus as our High Priest (see Hebrews 8:1). This verse says that Jesus:

endured the cross was shamed sat down

D. Why did Jesus sit down at the right hand of God? _____

E. Jesus was the one final sacrifice which was offered for the sins of mankind. The Lord's Supper is the celebration of this event. Paul quotes Jesus in 1 Corinthians 11:25 saying "This cup is the new covenant in My blood..." The blood represents the blood of the spilt sacrifice, shed on the cross.

IV. "What Does this Lesson Mean to Me?"

A. My sins have been forgiven.

1. When Jesus died on the cross, did He die for your sins? yes no
2. How many of your sins were covered by the blood of Jesus? _____

3. When Jesus died, you were not yet born. Therefore, how many of your “sins”, for which Jesus died, were in the future? _____

4. Did Jesus die for your past sins? _____ Did He die for your present sins? _____ Did he die for your future sins? _____

B. Forgiveness means that God removed the barrier of sin which has stood between you and Him. It does not mean that you have been saved from eternal separation from Him. When you confessed and repented of your personal sins against God you asked Jesus to “come into your life.” At that moment you were “saved.” Before God saved you He first forgave you in Jesus. When you believed the message of the Gospel you accepted Him by accepting His forgiveness for you. This meant that you were at that moment “reconciled” to God through Jesus. Salvation takes place after reconciliation. Many people who have been forgiven by God will be eternally separated from God. Forgiveness does not mean salvation. Salvation comes when a sinner repents and accepts Jesus as God’s sacrifice for his or her sins.

C. Do you remember the three dynamics of sin and forgiveness? They are:

1. A _____

2. F _____

3. R _____

V. Conclusion:

Briefly describe your understanding of these three dynamics as they have occurred in your life.

1. A _____

2. F _____

3. R _____

Teaching Session VI: “New Testament Studies”

I. Review

A. The Old Testament uses many illustrations of God cleansing His people from sins by sacrificing a _____. In the New Testament _____ describes Jesus as the _____ of God who takes away the sin of the world.

B. In Hebrews, Jesus is called the _____ Priest. It was His job as High Priest to make (or be) a one time offering or sacrifice to God for the sins of the people.

1. For whom did Jesus die? _____
2. How many sacrifices did He make? _____
3. What did he do after he finished His work and the sacrifice was complete? _____
4. His sacrifice made the Old Testament obsolete and was the beginning of a _____ Covenant.

C. In the Old Testament and New Testament times, the word “forgive” was more of a legal word which meant to “remit” or to “abolish”. It meant to remove something which was standing in the way, as a barrier might stand in the way prohibiting someone to cross from one road onto another. Prior to having free access, the barrier must be removed. This was the meaning of the word forgive.

D. Taking the meaning of the word forgive, Jesus removed the barrier of sin between sinful humanity and God so that we might have free access to God. This does not mean that we accept the forgiveness which he offers.

E. When a lost sinner accepts the forgiveness which God offers through Jesus on the cross, then forgiveness does its job, forgiveness is accepted, and the result is reconciliation or the restoration of a relationship.

F. The “total” of forgiveness is the sum of these three things. Define them in light of our study:

1. Atonement is _____
2. Forgiveness is _____
3. Reconciliation is _____

II. "Matthew 18:21-35"

A. Read these verses and answer the following questions.

1. What was the question which Peter asked Jesus? _____

2. How did Jesus respond? _____

3. Jesus told the disciples about the parable of the kingdom of heaven and how it could be compared to a _____

4. One slave owed the king a very _____ sum of money. This slave begged the king for more time to repay what he owed. The king had compassion on him and _____ his debt.

5. This same slave found the first man who owed him money and what did he do? _____

6. When the king heard about what this slave did to the other man how did he react? _____

7. What happened to the forgiven slave who did not forgive others?

B. What is the main point of this parable? _____

C. What other message does this parable imply? _____

III. "Luke 7:36-50"

A. Read these verses and answer the following questions.

1. Jesus was at the home of Simon the _____ for a dinner party.

2. A woman called a _____ was there washing Jesus' feet with her wet hair.
3. Was Simon critical of Jesus because he allowed the sinner woman to anoint Him? yes no
4. Jesus told Simon a parable about two _____
5. One man owed a _____ debt, the other a _____ debt.
6. Both men were forgiven. This means that the debt was _____
7. Who showed the greater love for the one who forgave their debts?

B. "The Point of the Parable"

1. Jesus compared the man with the small debt to _____ and the one with the great debt to _____
2. Jesus says that the sins of the woman were _____. Were the sins of Simon forgiven as well? yes no
3. Why do you think the woman was crying while she was wiping the feet of Jesus?

C. Read verse 50. Jesus tells the woman that her faith saved her and that she was to go in peace. What is the difference between the man Simon and the woman?

IV. Conclusion:

A. Everyone sins against God. Sins are like a barrier between God and us. Our desire and God's desire is to have fellowship one with the other. This is not possible because of sin. Sin has led to a broken relationship with God. God wants us to be at peace with him. So...

B. God had a plan to remove the sin barrier, which involved Jesus dying on the cross for the sins of the world.

C. Because Jesus died for the sins of the world, everyone has the same opportunity to accept God's forgiveness and to be reconciled or restored to fellowship with Him. This is the second part of God's plan.

D. By faith, when we accept God's forgiveness for our sins we are saved or reconciled to God.

E. Salvation is a two sided coin: One side is forgiveness, the other side is acceptance. Before this can take place, one must show sorrow and a desire to repent of sins and to follow God. It is by this faithful act that God completes the work of salvation in our heart.

Teaching Session VII: “Receiving and Giving Forgiveness”

I. Review

A. Everyone sins against God. Sins are like a barrier between God and us. Our desire and God’s desire is to have fellowship with one another. This is not possible because of sin. Sin has led to a broken relationship with God. God wants us to be at peace with him. So...

B. God had a plan to remove the sin barrier, which involved Jesus dying on the cross for the sins of the world.

C. Because Jesus died for the sins of the world, everyone has the same opportunity to accept God’s forgiveness and to be reconciled or restored to fellowship with Him. This is the second part of God’s plan.

D. By faith, when we accept God’s forgiveness for our sins we are saved or reconciled to God.

E. Salvation is a two sided coin: One side is forgiveness, the other side is acceptance. Before this can take place, one must show sorrow and a desire to repent of sins and to follow God. It is by this faithful act that God completes the work of salvation in our heart.

II. “Jesus cures the disease of death and gives eternal life”

A. Here is an illustration of a dead man who has died from cancer. He is laying on the table very dead because he had cancer. Let us imagine that a miracle worker came to look at this dead man and determined that he died of cancer. He heals this dead man of his cancer and leaves. This man still has a problem. He is dead. Let us say that another miracle worker comes along to see this man. He is the only miracle worker, the other man who cures cancer is not in this illustration. This miracle worker is known for raising dead people to life. He looks at the dead man and decides that he can raise him to life. The man comes to life but still has one big problem. He still has cancer and will soon die because of his cancer. The dead man has two problems. One problem is that he is _____ and the other problem is that he has _____. Therefore, two miracles must be performed:

1. He must _____
2. He must _____

B. When Jesus was offered as the sacrifice for the world he did two things at the time of his sacrifice:

1. He died for the payment of sin. (see Hebrews 9:22, 1 Peter 3:18)
2. He was raised to life so that He might be able to give us eternal life. (see John 3: 16, 10:10 and 6:23)

C. When we are born into this world, we are born spiritually dead with a disease called “sin”. We need a cure for our “sin” and we need spiritual life. Jesus offers both to those who believe.

1. Sin: No amount of ritual, self-discipline, or change of environment can make us clean and acceptable to God. Our problem is a failure to live up to God’s standard. The Bible calls it sin. Sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve’s rebellion against God, called the Fall of man, caused sin to enter the world. (see Romans 5:12)
2. Only Christ claimed He would rise again from the grave and live. And He did. Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed and all other religious leaders are still in their graves. Christ also made numerous appearances after He rose from the grave, giving further proof of His resurrection. The Bible records 11 such appearances before He ascended to heaven to be with His Father again. On one appearance he was seen by 500 people. (see Matt 28:8-10; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor 15:6,7)

III. “Jesus’ message was forgiveness”

A. Forgiveness was a great part of Jesus’ life. He forgave the paralytic (Mat 9:2), the sinful woman (Luke 7:47), the woman caught in adultery (John 8:10-11), even the men who nailed Him to the cross (Luke 23:34). Jesus’ whole purpose in coming to the earth was to die so that our sins could be forgiven. Accepting this great divine forgiveness enables us to forgive others.

B. To forgive someone implies that a wrong has been done. What wrong have we done? Jesus said:

What comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean (Mark 7:20-23).

C. Jesus wants to see us cleaned from our sin, given life eternal, and to have a right relationship with God. This is called “righteousness”. (see 2 Cor 5:21)

What do you think “righteousness” means? _____

D. When we receive Christ, our sins are washed away and we're given a new position before God. God declares us righteous. We cannot become righteous through our own efforts. God's standard is much too high. So it is important to allow God to dress us with his robe of righteousness to meet his perfect standard. (see Isaiah 61:10). Then God, in His love, sees us through Jesus Christ as perfect sons and daughters. Perfect not because of our perfection, but rather because we have taken on the Son's perfection, and by doing this have met God's perfect standard.

E. When we have been forgiven, we can also learn to forgive others who have sinned against us. This is a process which takes a long time. During this process we go through some of the following "stages." Listen to these stages and try to remember something about them for further discussion.

1. Denial
2. Self-blame
3. Victim
4. Indignation
5. Survivor
6. Integration

V. "I know I've Forgiven When..."

- A. I no longer have the fruit of unforgiveness in my life.
- B. I can talk about my offense without getting angry, resentful, or bitter.
- C. I can talk about my offender without getting a knot in my stomach.
- D. I can wish my offender good.
- E. I can look my offender in the eye with true and honest love in my heart.
- F. I can revisit the scene of the event without having a negative reaction.
- G. I can do good to those who have hurt me.
- H. I can be joyful.

Question: Do you want these qualities in your life? yes____ no _____

VI. "Forgiveness received must be forgiveness extended to others."

A. It is one thing to forgive a small thing which was committed against you such as someone telling you a lie, stealing a small sum of money, or saying something bad about you. It is quite another thing to forgive someone for killing your child, raping your wife, or destroying your home. These are difficult things to accept.

B. When we are first learning to forgive, we can get overwhelmed as we think of every wrong deed that's ever been committed against us and our family. We think, "I can't forgive all this." That is true. We may not be able to forgive everything that ever happened to us all at once. Forgiveness is a process.

C. When we choose not to forgive it has grave effects on our lives both mentally and physically. Listen to these effects and try to remember some which may bother you:

1. Mental

2. Physical

VII. Conclusion

A. Do you have a reason to offer forgiveness to someone? _____

B. Do you want to receive forgiveness and have peace in your heart? _____

C. Are you willing to accept the truths written in the Bible which offer you a way to find peace and happiness? _____

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Session One: Life Is Not Always Fair

1. Why do you think that bad things happen to good people?
2. Why do you think that good things happen to bad people?
3. What are the four illustrations used in the teaching session from the book of Genesis which show how sin has effected the world?
4. What are the results of “sin”?
5. How would you define “sin”?

Session Two: There Must be a Better Way

1. What does it mean to hold a grudge against someone?
2. What does it mean to forgive someone?
3. Does the Bible say that God has a right to hold a grudge against mankind for disobeying him?
4. Did God offer a way in the Old Testament for man to be forgiven for disobedience?
5. What does “atonement” mean?
6. What does “forgiveness” mean?
7. What does “reconciliation” mean?

Session Three: The Sins of a Great King

1. What is “sin”?
2. Why does God hate sin?
3. Why was King David’s sin so great?
4. What was the result of his sin?
5. David recognized his sin against God but he did not acknowledge his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. How can you explain this?

Session Four: Understanding Forgiveness

1. What are some different words used for “sin”?
2. What is the cycle which illustrates why revenge is not a good thing to seek?
3. What is forgiveness?
4. What is reconciliation?
5. How can forgiveness and reconciliation, as opposed to revenge, be a better way of relating to people who done bad things to you?

6. What do you think about the illustration used to show the many different qualities and variations of forgiveness? Is it accurate?

Session Five: The New Covenant

1. The Bible is divided into two sections. What are the names for these two sections?
2. Why is the first section called the “Old” Covenant?
3. Why is the second section called the “New” Covenant?
4. How was it explained that Jesus is the model for forgiveness in the Bible?
5. Who are the people who live “under” or in other words are “covered by” the New Testament?
6. Can Jesus forgive you of your sins?
7. Can Jesus forgive those who sinned against you?
8. Can you forgive those who sinned against you?

Session Six: Two New Testament Examples of Forgiveness

READ Matthew 18:21-35

1. What is the main point of this parable?
2. What does this mean to you?

READ Luke 7:36-50

1. What is the main point of this parable?
2. What does this mean to you?

Conclusion to session six:

1. Does everyone sin against God?
2. Have you sinned against God?
3. God had a plan to remove sin from the world. He would offer a blood sacrifice for the atonement of sin. This was the FIRST part of the plan.
 - a. What does Atonement mean?
 - b. Who was the sacrifice for the world?
 - c. What is the goal of atonement and forgiveness?
4. The second part of God’s plan was to give life to those who want to believe in him and his son Jesus Christ and to follow Jesus through faith.
 - a. What does it mean to believe in God?
 - b. How do we follow Jesus by faith?
5. What is the second part of the plan of God called?
6. What does it mean to be “born again”?
7. Do you want to be saved?

Session Seven: Receiving and Giving Forgiveness

1. The “dead” man in this illustration had two problems. What were they?
2. How did Jesus cure the problem of cancer?

3. How did Jesus cure the problem of death?
4. How does this correspond to the two sides of the coin of salvation?
5. What does forgiveness mean?
6. What does reconciliation mean?
7. Do you want to forgive and be forgiven?
8. Do you want to live at peace with other people?
9. Can you be at peace even if other people do not want to live in peace with you?
10. Who is called the Prince of Peace?
11. Can you forgive other people unless you have been forgiven by God and by others?
12. Do you want to be at peace with God and to believe that he loves you and has a plan and purpose for your life.

APPENDIX D

PRE QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Life History

age _____
place of birth _____
grew up in _____
marital status _____
children _____

II. Recent History of Participant

- A. Where did you live before the war?
- B. Where do you live now?
- C. Describe your journey from “before” to “now”.
- D. Where are the members of your immediate family?
- E. Where are the members of you extended family?
- F. How do you summarize your financial situation?
- G. Who are the people who have helped you?
- H. Which organizations have helped you?

III. Material evaluation

A. My perception of God. (circle the answer which best describes your response)

- 1. I believe there is a God...
yes I hope so maybe I do not know no
- 2. If there is a God, he must be a God of justice.
yes I hope so maybe I do not know no
- 3. If there is a God, he will make all things which are bad to one day be good.
yes I hope so maybe I do not know no
- 4. If there is a God, he loves me.
yes I hope so maybe I do not know no
- 5. If there is a God, he cares about what happens to me every day.
yes I hope so maybe I do not know no

6. If there is a God, he does not let bad things happen to good people.
 yes I hope so maybe I do not know no
7. If there is a God, he allows bad things to happen to good people for a reason.
 yes I hope so maybe I do not know no
8. There is a God.
 yes I hope so maybe I do not know no

B. My Understanding of Religion:

1. Religion is for...
 everyone some people women and children sick people weak people
2. A Religious person goes to worship...
 every day every week once a month twice a year once a year
3. A Religious person prays...
 every day every week once a month twice a year once a year
4. A Religious person reads a Holy Book...
 every day every week once a month twice a year once a year
5. Religion helps people when they have problems?
 yes, always frequently sometimes seldom no, never
6. A religious person follows the traditions of their religion...
 yes, always frequently sometimes seldom no, never
7. It is possible to be religious and not to believe in God.
 yes perhaps maybe for some people I do not know no
8. I am a religious person.
 yes, always frequently sometimes seldom no, never

C. My understanding of Jesus Christ

1. Jesus was just...
 an ordinary man a good man a prophet the son of God God
2. Jesus...
 died on the cross yes maybe no
 was raised from the dead yes maybe no
 forgave people their sins yes maybe no
 was God in the flesh yes maybe no
 was born of a virgin woman yes maybe no

died to save people from their sins	yes	maybe	no
was a sacrifice for the sins of people	yes	maybe	no
paid for my sins with his death	yes	maybe	no
gives eternal life to those who believe in him	yes	maybe	no

3. If someone believes that Jesus is the Son of God, they must be Christians.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
4. If someone is a Christian, they can not believe that there are other gods.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
5. To be a Christian means to hate all people who have other religions?
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
6. To be a Christian means trying to make all other people to believe in Jesus Christ as their God.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
7. To be a Christian, I must follow the traditions of the Catholic Church.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
8. To be a Christian, I must follow the traditions of the Orthodox Church.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
9. To be a Christian means that I do not have to be a member of a church.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

D. My understanding of Forgiveness

1. Before I can forgive people for their mistakes, they must come and seek forgiveness.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
2. Before I can forgive someone for doing something bad to me, they must pay for their mistake.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
3. Forgiveness can only be given after justice has been satisfied for the wrong which has been committed.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
4. It is not necessary to forgive everyone.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
5. It is easier to hate someone than to forgive them for the bad they do to me.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

6. You should always forgive people when they do bad things to you, even if they are not sorry for what they did to you.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

7. You should always forgive people when they do bad things to you, even if they do not ask you for forgiveness.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

8. You should always forgive people when they do bad things to you, even if you do not know who wronged you.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

9. Not forgiving someone can lead to physical problems.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

10. Not forgiving someone can lead to psychological problems.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

11. By forgiving people when they do something wrong to you, you can feel better about yourself.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

12. Revenge is better than offering forgiveness.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

13. Hating is better than forgiveness.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

14. When someone does something bad to me, I must do something bad to them to pay them back for their wrong.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

E. My understanding of reconciliation

1. It is easier to hate someone when they do bad things to me than to make the relationship better by trying to solve our problems.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

2. It is not necessary to live at peace with all people.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

3. I can never be reconciled to someone who has wronged me until their is justice and the wrong is made right.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

4. When someone wrongs me, they must first come to me to seek forgiveness and to ask for reconciliation in our relationship.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

5. God wants all people to live together in harmony and peace.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

6. Jesus died to reconcile God and all people in the world.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

APPENDIX E

POST QUESTIONNAIRE

A. My perception of God.

1. I believe there is a God...
yes I do not know no
2. If there is a God, he must be a God of justice.
yes I do not know no
3. If there is a God, he will make all things which are bad to one day be good.
yes I do not know no
4. If there is a God, he loves me.
yes I do not know no
5. If there is a God, he cares about what happens to me every day.
yes I do not know no
6. If there is a God, he does not let bad things happen to good people.
yes I do not know no
7. If there is a God, he allows bad things to happen to good people for a reason.
yes I do not know no
8. There is a God.
yes I do not know no

B. My Understanding of Religion:

1. Religion helps people when they problems
yes, always frequently sometimes seldom no, never
2. I am a religious person.
yes, always frequently sometimes seldom no, never
3. A Religious person prays...
every day every week once a month twice a year once a year

4. A Religious person goes to worship...
every day every week once a monthtwice a year once a year
 5. A Religious person reads a Holy Book...
every day every week once a monthtwice a year once a year
 6. I pray every day...
yes, always frequently sometimes seldom no, never
 7. I go to church...
every day every week once a monthtwice a year once a year
 8. I read the Bible...
every day every week once a monthtwice a year once a year
 9. It is possible to be religious and not to believe in God.
yes probably for some people I do not know no
 10. To be a religious person means to be a good person.
yes no
 11. Compared with other people, I am a good person
yes no
 12. Compared with God, I am not a good person.
yes no
 13. My "goodness" will not get me into heaven.
yes no
- C. My understanding of Jesus Christ
1. Jesus was just...
the sacrifice for sin a good man a prophet God
 2. If someone believes that Jesus is the Son of God, they must be Christians.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
 3. If someone is a Christian, they can not believe that there are other gods.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
 4. To be a Christian means to reject people of other faiths or religions?
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

5. To be a Christian means trying to make all other people to believe in Jesus Christ as their God.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
6. To be a Christian, I must follow the traditions of the Catholic Church.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
7. To be a Christian, I must follow the traditions of the Orthodox Church.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
8. To be a Christian, I do not have to be a member of a church.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
9. There is a difference in believing in Jesus with my mind and with my heart.
yes no
10. Believing in Jesus in only my mind will not get me into heaven.
yes no
11. One must believe in Jesus with both “head knowledge” and heart faith to get into heaven.
yes no

D. My understanding of Forgiveness

1. Before I can forgive someone for doing something bad to me, they must come and ask for forgiveness.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
2. Before I can forgive someone for doing something bad to me, they must pay for their mistake.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
3. Forgiveness can only be given after justice has been received for a wrong which has been committed.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
4. It is not necessary to forgive everyone who does bad things to me.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
5. It is easier to hate someone than to forgive them for the bad they do to me.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

6. You should always forgive people when they do bad things to you, even if they are not sorry for what they did to you.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
7. You should always forgive people when they do bad things to you, even if they do not ask you for forgiveness.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
8. You should always forgive people when they do bad things to you, even if you do not know who wronged you.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
9. Not forgiving someone can lead to physical problems.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
10. Not forgiving someone can lead to psychological problems.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
11. By forgiving people when they do something wrong to you, you can feel better about yourself.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
12. Revenge is better than offering forgiveness.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
13. Hating is better than forgiveness.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
14. When someone does something bad to me, I must do something bad to them to pay them back for their wrong.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
15. It is better to hate someone than to forgive them for the bad they do to me.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

E. My understanding of reconciliation

1. It is easier to hate someone when they do bad things to me than to make the relationship better by trying to solve our problems.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree
2. It is not necessary to live at peace with all people.
strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

3. I can never be reconciled to someone who has wronged me until their is justice and the wrong is made right.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

4. When someone wrongs me, they must be the first to seek forgiveness and to ask for reconciliation in our relationship.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

5. God wants all people to live together in harmony and peace.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

6. Jesus died to reconcile God and all people in the world.

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

7. It is better to hate someone who has wronged me than to try to seek a normal relationship with that person by solving our differences

strongly agree agree do not know disagree strongly disagree

F. Evaluation of the seminar:

1. This seminar has helped me to better understand the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation with those who have hurt me or wronged me.

yes no

2. I believe as the Bible teaches that God has forgiven everyone of their sins.

yes no

3. I believe that God has forgiven me of my sins.

yes no

4. I believe as the Bible teaches that forgiveness for those who have wronged me is a sign that I have received forgiveness from God.

yes no

5. I believe that the Bible says that to be a Christian I must accept God's forgiveness and that I must forgive others.

yes no

6. I believe with my mind that it is necessary to forgive everyone.

yes no

7. I believe with my heart that it is necessary to forgive everyone.

yes no

8. It is hard for me to believe in my heart what I have come to know in my mind.

yes no

9. I would like to be able to believe in my heart what I have learned this week.

yes no

10. This seminar has helped me to understand how do believe in my heart what I have learned in my mind.

yes no

11. I know that I am a Christian. That does not means that I am a religious person or a good person or a member of a church. That means that I have accepted Gods sacrifice in Jesus as the forgiveness of my sins and that I have learned how to forgive others who have wronged me.

yes no

12. After this seminar, I feel for the first time that God really loves me and that I can go to heaven. I have prayed to God to accept me and I now have peace with God.

yes no

13. I want to live in peace with all people. I know that this process will take a long time but I will be able to do this with God's help.

yes no

APPENDIX F

DAILY SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Sunday, March 24

1900 Teaching Session #1 “Life Is Not Fair”
2000 Division into small groups
2030 Completion of the Pre-Questionnaire

Monday, March 25

0900 Small Group Session #1
1030 Teaching Session #2 “Forgiveness Provides a Way for Reconciliation”
1430 Small Group Sessions #2

Tuesday, March 26

0900 Teaching Session #3 “The Sins of a Great King”
1430 Small Group Sessions #3

Wednesday, March 27

0900 Teaching Session #4 “A Case Study Focusing on the Dynamics of Forgiveness and Reconciliation”
1430 Small Group Sessions #4

Thursday, March 28

0900 Teaching Session #5 “New Covenant Forgiveness and Reconciliation”
1430 Small Group Session #5

Friday, March 29

0900 Teaching Session # 6 “New Testament Case Studies”
1430 Small Group Session #6

Saturday, March 30

0900 Teaching Session #7 “What Will I Do?”
1000 Small Group Session #7
1100 Completion of the Post-Questionnaire

APPENDIX G

GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS

GROUP #	AGE	MALES	FEMALES	MARRIED	DIVORCED	WIDOWED	SINGLE
1	17-25	1	5	0	0	0	6
2	26-40	5	2	2	0	0	5
3	41-55	3	9	9	1	2	0
4	56-71	3	4	2	1	4	0
5	56-71	0	7	2	1	4	0
TOTALS		12	27	15	3	10	11

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