

Overall Goal: The overall goal for all the lessons by Fig Tree Ministries is to help people deepen their understanding of the biblical text.

Class Learning Objectives: A more expansive understanding of the transformational power of forgiveness. Jesus promoted that the path to peace was through forgiveness, not anger, hatred, and violence toward one another.

Cultural Background: In the first century, Judaism became factional. The Sadducees vs. the Essenes vs. the Pharisees vs. the Zealots. Their hatred toward one another resulted in violence in the land and, eventually, a war with Rome. By 70 AD, God's Temple was destroyed, and Jerusalem was burned.

Preparation – Read Leviticus 19:18. As a general rule, Christians know the second half of Leviticus 19:18, but not the first. This commandment is the second part of the Greatest Commandment (Mark 12:28-34).

1. Jesus brought with him a message of **forgiveness** as the path to "loving your neighbor" and manifesting the kingdom of God -

- A proper perspective of what forgiveness means
 - - "a process through which individual **releases** an upset"
- Not merely a message of "God will forgive your sins," but that you, in the image of God, must be able to forgive the sins of others (see The Lord's Prayer – Matt. 6:12)
- Matt. 6:14 (Measure for Measure)
- Luke 23:34 – forgiveness from the cross

The path forward to **peace**, given the inherent suffering in the world, is through **forgiveness**.

Notes:

Forgiveness
- process of an individual releasing an “upset” created by the actions of another.
- a choice
- not condoning the behavior
- not mutually exclusive with proper Justice (you can forgive and still demand justice)

2. Message of Joseph

- Joseph is the first use of “forgiveness” in the Bible (Gen. 50:17)
- Context is to forgive “brothers.”

Joseph’s Options	
- power and revenge	- forgiveness

- Outcome: dysfunctional family (Genesis) transforms into a nation (Exodus)
- Forgiveness has a political aspect¹

Response (-)	“Upset”	Response (+)
- anger	Betrayal	- forgiveness
- bitter	Suffering	- goodness
- resentful		- love your neighbor
- revenge		

3. Jesus models for us the choice of how to respond in the face of suffering

- Worst suffering is the result of **Human Betrayal** –
- Dante’s Inferno: lowest level reserved for those who betray
- Cain – betrayed Abel. Abel is seen as the archetype of unjust suffering of a righteous person.

Notes: _____

¹ Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant and Conversation: Genesis*, pg. 327.

4. Jesus betrayed on all sides:

- Roman Justice system
- Jewish Justice system
- Religious Leaders
- Judas – a disciple
- Family

Picture of Jesus Death

Sinless: Perfect Human Being
Betrayal and Unjust: Worst Possible Suffering

5. Jesus response in the face of Betrayal and Injustice:

- 1 Peter 2:21-23

6. Zealots hated Jesus message of forgiveness

- Sicarii – a group of freedom fighters/domestic terrorists
- Incited the populous to war
- 66 AD war started with Rome / 70 AD Jerusalem and Temple destroyed.

7. Burnt House Museum – Jewish Quarter, Old City, Jerusalem.

- Ruins of a house which was burnt by the Roman Army in 70 AD.

8. Why did God allow his Temple to be destroyed?

- Twice in history, God’s House was destroyed:
 - 586 BCE by the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar
 - 70 AD by the Romans under Titus (who would eventually become Emperor)
- What do the Rabbis give as a reason?
 - **Baseless Hatred:** they hated each other for no reason.

Notes:

"Why was Jerusalem destroyed?
 The first time because of idol worship;
 second time because of the unqualified hatred."

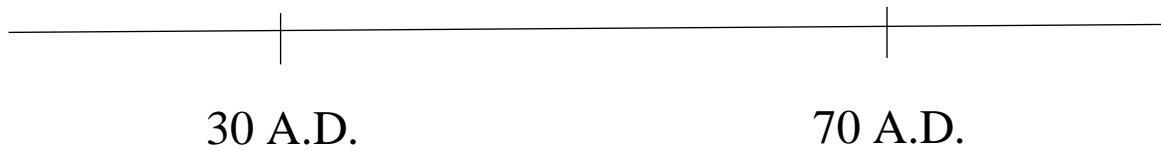
Babylonian Talmud, Kallah 5:1

"Why was the first temple destroyed?
 Because of three iniquitous things that existed there - idolatry, illicit relations, and bloodshed.
 But the second temple - why was it destroyed?
 Because of baseless hatred that existed there."

Yoma Folio 9b

Forgiveness

Baseless Hatred



9. The antidote to deep-seated hatred is to choose Forgiveness:

- The seeds of baseless hatred were already taking root in Jesus day
- Jesus was being presented to Rome as a Zealot
- Brother hated brother.

“When people lack the ability to forgive, they are unable to resolve conflict. The result is division, factionalism, and the fragmentation of a nation into competing groups and sects...Those who seek freedom must learn to forgive.”

Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant and Conversation: Genesis*, pg. 327

Notes:

10. Edith Eva Egar, *The Choice: Embracing the Possible* (2017)

11. If a significant thread of Jesus' teaching concerns forgiveness, then the church must be the leaders in helping people see that the path forward to peace is through forgiveness.

Faith Principle 1: Forgiveness is the antidote to Baseless Hatred

When we are upset for no reason at another human being, the only option is to choose forgiveness.

This isn't easy to do. We feel powerful in our anger. We feel self-righteous. We want justice.

Jesus tells us that the path to peace is forgiveness. If Jesus is our Lord, then we must choose forgiveness.

Faith Principle 2: Forgiveness has Transformational Power for humanity.

Forgiveness is the process of moving you from "bearing a grudge" to "loving your neighbor."

There is transformational power to be able to forgive. It takes work and a choice to move in that direction.

True freedom is achieved when we are free from the hatred of another.