

3. What did you learn from the various individuals about encouraging the planting of an ethnic church?

4. Read this quote: “Upon all who believe, God has placed the burden of raising up churches.... Our churches, large and small, are not to be treated in such a way that they will be helplessly dependent upon ministerial aid. The members are to be so established in the faith that they will have an intelligent knowledge of medical missionary work. They are to follow Christ’s example, ministering to those around them. Faithfully they are to fulfill the vows made at their baptism, the vow that they will practice the lessons taught in the life of Christ.” (*Medical Ministry* 315). How would your local church and your persona life be different if we followed this counsel?

5. Discuss what you and your team should do in order to help build up the body of believers, especially among unreached ethnic groups.

If your team thinks that you would like to do a *Discovery Bible Group* use these questions to help you move forward.

- A) Which of our international, non-Christian friends could we like to invite?
- B) Who of our team should lead the group? (Should we have more than one leader or group?)
- C) Where could we meet?
- D) How long should the meeting last each week?
- E) When will we start and how many weeks should it last?
- F) Should we serve any refreshments and who should be in charge of them?

G) What costs might we have and how shall we cover them?

H) What Bible stories will we cover that match the needs and background of the non-Christians attending? (Consider options in Appendix E).

ASSIGNMENTS (5 Minutes)

1. What have you learned today and how will you use it this week?
2. What do you plan to do to follow up on any of the friendships you have developed?
3. Review the *Discovery Group Outline*. Use it with at least one group this week whether in your family worship, with a friend, or in a church small group.
4. Mobilize and Multiply. Share with a friend or family member what you learned about being a Spirit-filled church. Send him or her the Discovery Group Outline and encourage him or her do start a group either with you or with others.
5. Read *Growing Refugee Churches*.
6. Watch at least one of the following video clips to learn more about how to build God's church (check online for updates):
 - A) Elder Dan Serns, Mr. Fabian Reid, and Elder Scott Griswold's share their experiences in starting home groups and ethnic churches.
 - B) Dr. Anthony Wagner-Smith passionately shares the importance of church planting and the basic steps.
7. Complete study #11 in *My Favorite Missionary* and focus your prayers on people in religions that are "New, Very Old, or Unusual" in *Praying for the World Next Door*.
8. Complete the form: *Field Activity #11*

TEAM PRAYER (10 Minutes)

Pray for God to raise up a new group of believers through you; pray for many more groups and churches to be planted.

Promises to Claim:

- How will the temple be built? *“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts (Zechariah 4:6).*
- *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).*
- *The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members but for unbelievers also” (Evangelism 115).*
- *“We need the vitalizing power of the Spirit—the strong cry of a church travailing to bring forth souls. There is need of more earnest wrestling with God for the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Eager, earnest, importunate prayer is needed. There is efficiency in prayer. In answer to fervent prayer God can turn the thoughts and hearts of men as he turns the waters of the sea” (Review and Herald, December 30, 1902).*

Forgiving Others Brings Great Blessings

Life has many disappointments and heartaches. Many of us struggle daily, feeling hurt by people who should have been safe and nurturing. Many of us even carry deep woundedness from abuse, neglect, and rejection sometimes even from family members or church leaders. An additional burden that we often carry is the feelings of anger, hatred, and bitterness towards those who have hurt us. It feels just and right to be upset at the wrongs, yet we also know that these emotions can destroy us. Negative thoughts and feelings have made many people physically sick or mentally ill. Bitterness and unforgiveness towards one individual often also negatively impact our other relationships. Hatred can even lead to revenge and murder. The choices we make to not forgive someone are like weeds in a beautiful garden. If ignored, they can get bigger and choke out everything beautiful. If we hide our feelings and do not deal with the issues, it is as if we have cut off the top of the weeds and left the roots in the ground. The feelings and thoughts will likely grow stronger until they spring up in some way to spoil the garden of our lives (Hebrews 12:15).

How do we get rid of such weeds? Learning to forgive others is a challenging but doable process. Many have found comfort and answers in the principles in the Bible. Our problems are of different types and severity. Some offenses based on misunderstandings can be solved in a short time. Other deep-seated wounds take much longer to heal. Let's determine to grow in our understanding and experience of God's healing ways.

1. **Express our hurt and anger in healthy ways.** There are many prayers in the Psalms that make it clear God wants us to talk to Him about our feelings, even when we are angry. One example is Psalm 56. God is a safe person to share with because He knows everything about us, yet still loves us. He also has the power to help us deal with our thoughts, feelings, and situations. It is not healthy or helpful to stuff our feelings (Psalm 32:3). However, we can also cause real problems by speaking angrily (Proverbs 25:28) or gossiping to others (Proverbs 26:20-27). Many people have been significantly helped by talking to a trained counselor or a caring mentor. Others find it very helpful to write out their thoughts and feelings, and then find comfort through God's word.
2. **Focus on God's love and forgiveness.** When we are hurting and broken by what others have done to us, we need Jesus' healing love. "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5). Jesus experienced horrific physical abuse, terrible betrayal by His closest friends, shame and embarrassment on the cross, and the desperate feelings of abandonment. He understands our pain. He can heal our hurt as we focus on His love and ask for healing. Besides this, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). As we repent of our sins and ask for forgiveness, He freely forgives us and we find peace (Romans 8:1). When we know we are loved and forgiven, it makes it easier to forgive others (Ephesians 4:24). When we recognize that our sins killed God's Son, it humbles our hearts to realize we are all sinners and we should forgive each other (See the parable in Matthew 18:21-35). Focusing on Jesus' love helps us move towards forgiving others.

A strong and supportive group of friends can provide the non-judgmental, loving atmosphere in which a hurting or angry person can feel the forgiveness and love of God. We should seek out such people and be that kind of people to help each other experience God's love and be able to extend it towards others.

3. **Understand the Difference Between a Forgiving Heart and Reconciliation.** Jesus expressed mercy, saying, "Father, forgive them," while the soldiers were still driving the nails in Jesus hands. However, God was not reconciled to any of them until they turned from their sins and repented. This is similar to our relationships. We can choose a heart of mercy and forgiveness towards those who have hurt us, but it would be safe to try to reconcile with them because they continue to do what is wrong. Jesus said, "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). We should humbly seek to work out our problems with each other whenever possible (Galatians 6:1-5). However, Jesus also recognized there are times we cannot reconcile without the help of others. He taught His church a process in which to hold people accountable who are doing wrong to others (Matthew 18:15-20). Some completely refuse to stop their sin and abuse and so separation, not reconciliation, is the only option.
4. **Extend love to our enemies.** Even when hurtful people continue in their sin, Jesus still calls us to, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43). Such kindness is impossible without God's transformation of our hearts. We need to confess our bitterness and unforgiveness to God, ask Him for a heart of love and forgiveness, then step out in faith to do good towards our enemies Jesus, with His huge heart of mercy, can live in our hearts, empowering us to forgive and extend kindness to those who have hurt us (Colossians 3:3, 8-14). Even if the person does not respond and refuses to be reconciled, we can be free from bitterness and unforgiveness, living a life of love.

You may wish to pray something like this:

Merciful God, Full of Forgiveness and Kindness, my heart hurts. I have been deeply wounded by someone I trusted. It was so wrong, so hurtful, so unnecessary. *(Tell God your pain. Speak out your disappointment).*

Thank You for sending Jesus to show me Your love and to experience my pain. He was beaten, mocked, and shamed. Still He said, "Father forgive them" and He forgave me too. Please heal me with Your love. I too have hurt You in many ways. It was my sins that killed Jesus. Please forgive me.

I know I should forgive those who have hurt me, but it feels so hard. I cannot do it on my own. Forgive me for my bitterness and anger towards them *(be specific about the persons and what they have done)*. Please give me a new heart, fill me with Your forgiveness towards them. I want justice. I want them to pay for what they have done. You love them and hope to redeem them. Please find a way to do that. If they do not respond, and continue to do what is wrong, I know that one day, when Jesus returns You will give them what they deserve and I do not need to take revenge. I surrender them into Your hands.

Now give me Your power so that I might not block You from reaching out to them with Your forgiveness. Love through me and help me to often pray for them. Thank You for Your gracious, forgiving heart and for answering my prayer. In Jesus' precious name, amen.

Once again we want to emphasize that forgiving others and inward healing is a process. It can be like an onion with many layers. Various events can often bring up memories that remind us of hurtful experiences, triggering negative thoughts and feelings. Each time we can use these various principles from God's word to help us, releasing more of the pain and bitterness and receiving more of God's mercy and peace.

It is also important to recognize that in our multi-cultural world we will see forgiveness and reconciliation happening in different forms. Some cultures use a mediator, some make use of stories, and some solve differences through actions rather than words. Regardless, the Biblical principles are the same, leading those who follow them to greater peace and release from bitterness.