



Say to wisdom, “you are my sister” And make understanding your closest friend. For they will keep you from the immoral woman.
Proverbs 7:4-5a

Women’s Discipleship Group – 2006
HELPMATES, HANDMAIDENS & HARLOTS ONLINE BIBLE STUDY
LOVE LIFE SERIES
LESSON #3 Love and Forgiveness Part 2
HANDMAIDENS
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Definitions: *Helpmate – Handmaiden – Harlot*

Helpmate: A married woman who is committed to the well-being of her husband.

Handmaiden: A married or unmarried woman who is committed to serving the Lord.

Harlot: A married or unmarried woman who will sacrifice her soul and body for personal gain.

Scripture Focus:

Handmaiden: Philippians 4:2-3 (Living) – And now I want to plead with those two women, Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. And I ask you, my true teammate, to help these women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News.

Forgiveness: The act of renouncing anger and releasing a fault or offense. To grant a full pardon to one who has wronged you. Note: God wants us to forgive. The word unforgiveness is not found in the dictionary.

OPENING STATEMENT:

Today we will review part two of our “super-sized” lesson on *love and forgiveness*. I am extending this lesson because I have to come to recognize that ***forgiveness is love’s greatest work***. Forgiveness is difficult and sometimes complicated, but it is possible. The Word of God says that it is also necessary for our physical and spiritual well-being. In part one we focused on husbands and wives. In today’s lesson we will center our study on love and forgiveness between women who are friends and labor together in ministry and other fields of endeavor.

The Handmaiden’s Story:

The fourth chapter of Philippians tells the brief story of two women ministry leaders called Euodia (pronounced: You–oh–dih–uh) and Syntyche (pronounced: Sin–tih–keh). It appears that these women were gifted leaders who joined forces to help build a thriving church in the city of Philippi. The involvement of women in the church at Philippi was quite common. The first church meetings in that region started at the home of a wealthy businesswoman named Lydia. (Acts 16:12-15) The church at Philippi soon became known for its generosity and the support it rendered to ministry leaders. (Philippians 4:10). Somewhere along the way Euodia and Syntyche had a disagreement that threatened the well being of the church at Philippi. The Apostle Paul gives no clue as to what these two women were feuding about. However, he does make several important points that give us insight as to how in this day and age we can overcome an offense and move on to love and forgiveness.

1. Paul opens his remarks in Philippians 4:2 by pleading with Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind. Please note that when the Apostle Paul took the time to address this matter in writing, it must have been serious. It is significant that he mentions Euodia first. In biblical writings, the name of the lead person was always mentioned first. Euodia may have been the older woman, the more seasoned of the two, or perhaps she came to the church before Syntyche. Whatever the case, Paul points to the fact that in order to settle a dispute, you start with the person who is the most spiritually mature. In simple language, Paul was probably saying to Euodia, “Look, you’re more mature, so in order to keep the peace bend a little. Find a way to work things out.” If you are in a dispute with another sister, your level of spiritual maturity will be put to the test. Perhaps you will be the first one that the Lord looks at and says: “Come on now. You’re mature enough to forgive this person and to release this matter into My hands.” If you try to tell the Lord that it’s not your fault and you’re not going to stay around to be mistreated, you’re only going to be faced with a similar situation further down the road. *Romans 15:1 – We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*

2. In the case of Euodia and Syntyche, Paul was a man of few words — *settle your disagreement*. Isn’t it just like the Devil to find a way to bring division to a place where there was once love and unity? If you are involved in a friendship or ministry with other sisters, please understand that sooner or later you will disagree about something. However, you should never allow a disagreement to escalate into a full-blown fight. Here is what you can do to keep the lid on things:
 - A. Pray and ask the Lord to show you what concessions you can make in order to keep the peace.
 - B. Go to the sister or sisters involved in the disagreement to hear in their own words the nature of the offense.
 - C. Don’t discuss the disagreement with other people or receive information from other people.
 - D. Be flexible. Things may not always work out your way. You may be misunderstood, but work hard to come to a resolution where you both can forgive and forget.
 - E. If you’ve done something wrong, don’t let pride, hurt, or anger stand in your way. It is easier to repent, than it is to have God spank you.
 - F. If the matter remains unresolved, find a neutral party — pastor, counselor, etc. Ask them to help you and your sisters find a peaceful solution. *Romans 14:19 — Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to the building up of one another.*

3. Satan knows the things that set women at odds with one another and nine out of ten times it’s always something personal. Could it be that there was a personal offense between Euodia and Syntyche that eventually affected their ministry? Even now, this can happen between women who are co-workers, business partners, classmates, and ministry partners. Personal offenses can be any of the following and more: Didn’t receive the recognition she deserved, betrayed a confidence or gossiped, borrowed money that was never returned, dated an ex-boyfriend or acted inappropriately with a sister’s husband, a controlling spirit, or jealous and competitive based on looks, age, popularity, etc. The list goes on. Right now I want to give you an important key to success: The woman who can humble herself and withstand the most offenses will always end up at the front of the line. *1 Peter 5:6 — Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

4. In Philippians 4:3, Paul takes another step to rectify the breach between Euodia and Syntyche. He appeals to the people in the church to help these two women settle their differences. One of the greatest hindrances in moving from *offense* to *forgiveness* is the people who love to stir up strife. If you are involved in a dispute with a sister, please don't allow yourself to listen to negative reports from other people. Paul recognized that the people in the church of Philippi had the power to help these two sisters become reconciled and by doing so, strengthen the church. Or, people could cause these two sisters and the church to be divided forever. Very often a troublemaker isn't on anybody's side. That person is being used by the Enemy to bring down the women who are doing a great work together. *Proverbs 16:28 — A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends.* When sisters who love one another and labor together in ministry have differences, I want to encourage you to be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker. Here's what you can do to help:
- A. Join with others to pray for sisters like Euodia and Syntyche in your circle. Don't allow your prayers to turn into a gossip session.
 - B. Let the feuding sisters know how much you appreciate their hard work and dedication. Remind them that they are your role models.
 - C. Don't bring negative information about one sister to the other sister who is involved in the dispute.
 - D. Don't allow people in your group to talk to you about who's right and who's wrong. The one who gossips is as guilty as the one who listens.
 - E. Don't quit or walk away because people in the group are having differences.

Summary:

In order to have a successful friendship as well as a successful ministry, you must master the art of forgiving and forgetting offenses. It is not my intention to minimize the pain that comes with betrayal, disloyalty, and other deeply felt wounds. But we must remember that we have not been asked to endure anything that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ did not experience at the hands of his friends. Yet, in the midst of his suffering he said in Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Only a person who is blinded by the Enemy would abuse a faithful friend who overlooks their faults, gives their last dollar, and comes to her rescue whether she is right or wrong, weak or strong. If you are a sister who survived a hurt that was inflicted by a close friend, to God be the glory! You are learning what it means to love the unlovely. Your spirit is becoming stronger than ever, but most of all you are becoming more and more like Christ.

YOUR STORY:

Have you ever had to go through the process of love and forgiveness with a sister-friend? Please share your story.

OBSERVATIONS AND PERSONALIZATIONS:

Let's take a look at what happens when women don't forgive one another. You may be surprised at the long-term effects.

The Story of Leah and Rachel

Genesis 30:1 — Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister (Leah), and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!"

Genesis 30:7 — And Rachel’s maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, “With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister (Leah), and indeed I have prevailed. So she called the child’s name Naphtali. (Naphtali means to wrestle or struggle)

Genesis 30:15 — But Leah said to Rachel, “Wasn’t it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son’s mandrakes, too?”

As a result of unforgiveness, what happened to the children of Leah and Rachel?
Read — Genesis 37:2-10

As a result of love and forgiveness, what happened to the nation of Israel during a time of famine? Read — Genesis 45:4-11

Additional Study on Unforgiveness

The Story of Sarah and Hagar

What was the offense between Sarah and Hagar?
Read — Genesis 16:1-16

What happened to the children of Sarah and Hagar?
How did their relationship affect the nations?
Read — Genesis 21:8-21

STORIES – COMMENTS - QUESTIONS

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Lesson: Love and Forgiveness Part 1

FORGIVENESS IS A PROCESS

When you have been deeply wounded and betrayed, forgiveness is not an event it is a process that hopefully brings you to a place of healing. There are no shortcuts, but it is well worth the journey. You must make the choice to forgive minute by minute and day by day until God’s healing balm washes over you and with the help of the Holy Spirit you actually come to a place where the process of forgiveness is complete.

When my husband had an affair and decided he wanted a “do-over,” he chose to break our covenant marriage. I was completely devastated. Even though I am a competent professional and confident woman, I was completely broken and humbled by what happened. God became

my all and all. He was my vindicator, my provider, and my counselor. The Lord became the #1 priority in my life. Mark 11:25 says that if you do not forgive others, your Heavenly Father will not forgive you. When I read these words I understood that unforgiveness was not an option, even if I felt justified. I decided that I needed God much more than I needed to hold on to anger and bitterness. I took all of my pain to the cross and prayed that I would see my husband as God sees him and love him as God loves him. This was a huge undertaking. But if we are obedient, God is faithful to help us. I have learned that true love and forgiveness are possible through Christ who gives us the strength to do all things. We have the victory and the glory belongs to God.