**TEACHING SET UP**

Let Go(d) – Week B

MAIN POINT GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

**The more you hold onto a grudge,**

**the more the grudge has a hold on you.**

To encourage students to let go of grudges

and trust in the Lord to bring justice

MAIN SCRIPTURES

***31****Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.****32****Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31-32 NIV)*

***17****Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.****18****If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.****19****Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.****20****On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”* ***21****Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17-21 NIV)*

**HSM+ Optional Scripture:** *But if our unrighteousness brings out God’s righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) 6 Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? (Romans 3:5-6 NIV)*

HOPE: MULTIPLE CAMPUSES, 1 CHURCH.

At Hope we have multiple campuses so each week there are different speakers delivering the message to different sets of students. We want to balance giving each speaker and each campus freedom to tailor the message to fit them while uniting as one church in the same direction we teach our students.

**We ask that all speakers teach the provided main point and main Scripture**. We have provided a detailed message outline, but there is freedom in how much of that you use and how much you’d like to tailor to either fit you or your campus better. Talk to your campus staff about how to best go about this for your specific week.

**We also want to unite in pointing to Jesus’ saving grace each message** – a Cross Connection segment is written in the message outline.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

* The introduction is intended to connect you, the speaker, to the audience usually through a personal story or observation.
* *Speaker note: Share a personal story about a grudge you held or a time you tried to take revenge – bonus points if it’s from when you were in middle or high school – feel free to make it light and funny*
  + *For example, your friend pranked you and you tried to prank them back but it backfired*
* When someone wrongs us, we want to get back at them.
* When someone wrongs us, we tend to hold a grudge.

TENSION

* *Switch to a more serious tone:* But seriously, sometimes we can hold onto things for a long time.
  + Maybe we don’t even remember why we don’t like that guy or girl in our class but we remember it’s because they did something mean back in the 2nd grade.
  + Maybe someone told a joke – and you didn’t even tell them it offend you – but you’ve been holding onto that for years and aren’t friends anymore.
* **But today I really want you to hear something: holding onto a grudge doesn’t just effect THEM, it effects YOU.**
* **The more you hold onto a grudge, the more it has a hold on you.**
* Monkey – banana – hunter example:
  + Do you know how some hunters trap monkeys?
  + They put a banana in a cage with just a big enough opening for the monkey to get his hand through. The monkey reaches in for the banana, but when he tries to take it out – his fist is too big and he is stuck. The monkey could just let go of the banana and get free, but instead the monkeys keep holding the bananas and the hunters get them.
* Why am I telling this story? Because too often we are the monkeys, and the banana is the grudge we are holding onto. **Remember last week how we talked about how forgiveness sets us free?** We are going to dive even deeper into that today.
* If we hold onto the grudge – we are the ones trapped. When we learn to let go and let God – it sets us free.
* So WHY do we hold onto grudges? The Bible has some amazing things to say on why we might hold onto grudges and how we can embrace a better way of living.
* *MIDDLE SCHOOL: Speakers may hang out here longer with middle school audiences to help them fully connect the dots*

TRUTH

* ***17****Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.****18****If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.****19****Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.****20****On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”* ***21****Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17-21 NIV)*
* Ok, let’s break some things down from this verse and really look at them
  + First, you’ll notice it says don’t repay evil for evil. This is because there is an urge inside of us – when someone hurts us, we want to get them back. This is a natural instinct. It doesn’t make you a monster to feel that way sometimes, it makes you human. But the Bible says there is a better way.
  + It says don’t repay evil for evil. It doesn’t work. It turns you into someone you don’t want to be: bitter and evil.
  + But you may be thinking WHO WILL MAKE THINGS RIGHT? Who will take revenge? Who will ensure justice happens? How am I supposed to just let this go?
  + That takes me to my next points.
    - 1.The Bible acknowledges what happened was EVIL and
    - 2. The Bible says it’s actually God’s job to set things right. God Himself says He will repay.
  + I don’t know about you – but when I hear that God wants to take action on my behalf – to bring justice and make things right – that helps me see things differently.
  + God is saying to us, “TRUST ME, I got this.”
  + God wants to bring JUSTICE and He also wants to bring healing.
  + God encourages us to overcome evil with good.
  + Our God is a God of reconciliation and healing.
  + **Forgiving is not saying what they did was ok, forgiving is just saying you are letting go of what they did and putting it in God’s hands.**
  + So the recap:
    - Our job – to live at peace with everyone and overcome evil with good.
    - God’s job – to bring justice.
* **HIGH SCHOOL +: Our focus today is on forgiving others, but the Scripture brings up another topic: God’s wrath. Isn’t God loving – is He also wrathful? The short answer – YES, He is both.** 
  + How can we reconcile the thought that God is both loving and wrathful?
  + By looking at the cross. The cross is where God’s wrath on humanity is poured out – so that JUSTICE can be achieved.
  + The cross is where God’s love is shown the greatest – because He gave His life to save us from death.
  + *But if our unrighteousness brings out God’s righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) 6Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? (Romans 3:5-6 NIV)*
* God wants you to let go of your grudge and embrace forgiveness because He knows:
  + **The more you hold onto a grudge, the more it has a hold on you.**
  + **Forgiveness sets YOU free.**
* When someone wrongs us, they become in our debt. Holding a grudge is continuing to hold that debt against them. They may not even know, but we can hold onto it tightly for years.
* Forgiveness is when we let go of holding onto that debt against them. It doesn’t mean we forget, but it means we forgive them and don’t hold it against them anymore.
* Forgiving someone else not only sets them free from the debt we are holding against them, it sets us free from BITTERNESS.
* ***31****Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.****32****Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31-32 NIV)*
* Need more motivation to forgive others – other than it’s God’s best for your life? Remember how much Jesus has forgiven you – and extend that forgiveness to others.
* **Cross Connection:** We’ve talked about this before – but it’s so important I want to talk about it again because I never want us to forget or miss it: **When we sin, we become in God’s debt – the fair thing we deserve? His punishment and death.**
  + This is actually horrible news, (pause) but thankfully the news doesn’t stop there.
  + ***8****But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 NIV)*
  + **Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave to pay the penalty for our sins and FORGIVE OUR DEBT.** (John 3:16) When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, our debts against God are forgiven.
* **One big hurdle that keeps us from forgiving others is thinking: “This isn’t fair.” My question to you, “Is it fair for you to hold onto other people’s sins when God has forgiven yours?”**

APPLICATION

* What are you holding onto that you need to let go and let God handle?
* Do you trust God enough to bring His justice and His goodness to the evil against you?
* Who do you need to forgive?
* Get alone this week and write down the names of the people you need to forgive (somewhere private – you don’t need to post this list on your kitchen fridge). After writing the names down, say a prayer to God, naming each person, and asking God to help you forgive that person.

LANDING

* **The more you hold onto a grudge, the more it has a hold on you.**
* **Forgiveness sets us free.**