Christmas really is for giving forgiveness. On that first Christmas 2,000 years ago, the Baby in the cradle was God’s gift to man to be forgiven.

If there were no _____ there would be no Christmas. Christmas exists because sin exists in the world.

Although most would agree that this is the best time of the year—it is oftentimes a season where the pain of life is amplified. Many people say that they just “tolerate” or “survive” the holidays. There are many sources of family stress—not the least of which is relational difficulty and conflict. Perhaps this Christmas you may need to give and/or receive the gift of forgiveness.

I. Christmas is about _________________

The Old Testament reveals a story of brutal family pain. Joseph was a young man who had great dreams and visions from God. His brothers became filled with anger and jealousy that they decided to sell him into slavery. Throughout Joseph’s life, he suffered injustice and false accusations. Yet he maintained the favor of God on his life and was promoted as second in command over Egypt. Years have passed by and he finds himself face-to-face with those same brothers who had betrayed him (Read Genesis 45:1-3).

Those we love can often hurt us the most and we can hurt them as well. There are three Biblical choices that we must make when we’ve been hurt...

1. **When I’m Hurt, I Must Choose to __________________**
   When Christ was on the cross, betrayed by mankind and His own disciples, He prayed “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). When you’ve been hurt, what do you pray for the person who has hurt you?
   * Pray for God to heal their hurt – hurting people hurt people and are easily hurt by other people.
   * Pray for God to forgive them – that God would reveal and convict them of their sin.
   * Pray for God to bless them – this is difficult but Biblical!
   When you pray in this way, your prayers may or may not affect them – but it most certainly will affect you!

2. **When I’m Hurt, I Must Choose to __________________**
   Why is that so important? Matthew 6:14-15, “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive me their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” If you refuse to forgive those who have sinned against you, God will refuse to forgive you. Jesus taught that we should forgive a person “seventy times seven” (see Matthew 18:21-22). You get to this place where you choose to forgive by concentrating on how much God has forgiven you. Colossians 3:13, “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another as the Lord has forgiven you.”

3. **When I’m Hurt, I Must Choose to __________________**

   C.S. Lewis writes: “We find that the work of forgiveness has to be done over and over again. We forgive, we mortify our resentment; a week later some chain of thought carries us back to the original offense and we discover the old resentment blazing away as if nothing had been done about it at all. We need to forgive our brother seventy times seven not only for 490 offenses but for one offense.”
“...Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” (Luke 6:27-28). Joseph eventually said, “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God...Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them.” (Genesis 45:1, 14-15a).

What is on the other side of forgiveness in your life? For Joseph, on the other side of forgiveness was the birthing of an entire nation. The lineage of the Messiah was poured down through an act of forgiveness.

II. Christmas is about ____________________________

How do we initiate forgiveness or approach those whom we have actually hurt? It is far easier to remember those who have hurt us than it is for us to remember when we hurt other people.

1. ___________ and Acknowledge Those We Have Hurt. Matthew 5:23-24, “Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar...” This Christmas – wrestle with the question: “Who have I hurt?” Take inventory of your relationships and don’t do anything else until you have resolved this issue. Ask them this key question: “How have I hurt you?”

2. __________ Everything to Make it Right – vs. 24, “Leave your gift there in front of the altar...first go and be reconciled to your brother, then come offer your gift.” Proverbs 6:2-5 says, “If you have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your mouth, then do this, my son, to free yourself... Go and humble yourself; press your plea with your neighbor! Allow no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids.”

Two Biblical Considerations:
* Apologize face-to-face. Don’t email an apology. If at all possible do it in person. In Galatians 2:11 we see how Paul handled a problem with Peter: “When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong.”
* Do your part and trust God to do the rest. The relationship may or may not be restored. You cannot control their reaction or response. Romans 12:18 says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends upon you, live at peace with everyone.”

3. __________ our Heart and our Gifts to God. – vs. 24, “...First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come offer your gift to the Lord.” Nothing else matters in this world like relationships. The only thing that is eternal is relationships. Satan loves to destroy what is most important to the heart of God.

III. Christmas is about ____________________________

Matthew 1:21-22 – the angel said to Mary, “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.” Many Christians are still carrying around the pain of guilt and unforgiveness in their heart.

We can turn to one of three places when we’re hurting:
* We Can Turn __________ -- “I feel so badly about this...I’m such a miserable person.”
* We Can Turn __________ -- “Would you please tell me that I’m not as bad as I think I am? I need something to help numb away the pay and guilt I feel.”
* We Can Turn __________ -- We can turn toward God and allow Him alone to be our source of strength and peace during times of pain.

The past cannot be changed, but the ______________ of the past can be changed. Christmas is about Jesus coming into the world to provide you with forgiveness and a second chance.

What is the one sin that God cannot forgive? The only sin God cannot forgive is the sin of ______________ His forgiveness.

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I. Christmas is about____Forgiving____

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1. **When I’m Hurt, I Must Choose to ______Pray______**
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II. Christmas is about __________ Forging

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