



Darkwood Brew.org

Wherever You Are, We'll Meet You There

New to the role of facilitator? Here are a few tips to help you get started.

- First of all, a facilitator's job is to coordinate the flow of each session. View the video segment ahead of time and make your own notes and observations.
- Prepare the meeting place so that it is comfortable. Arrive early; help organize any refreshments and test your video player/computer.
- Getting to know one another helps the discussions flow. Welcome all, catch up and reflect a bit on last week's session in the first few minutes.
- You don't have to be the expert. You are not expected to provide answers to questions provided. So let the questions ignite the conversation and see where it takes the group.
- It's everyone's responsibility to make sure everyone else gets an equal amount of time to talk.
- Listen first; evaluate later. Make sure you understand a comment, then ask questions or pose other options.
- Encourage participants to bring a Bible or other resources.
- If you feel so moved, start, and/or end your session in prayer.

Leaders Guide

"Forgiveness"

Should you forgive and forget? Is anything unforgivable? Are there times when you shouldn't forgive?

Darkwood Brew Executive Director Rev. Eric Elnes, Ph.D., and popular series guest Rev. Bruce Van Blair are front and center for a provocative and surprising examination of the Christian concept of forgiveness. This four-part systematic study asks where the authority to forgive comes from; when is forgiveness required; and whether or not forgiveness might be optional. Spoiler alert: It's not. Finally, they will explore the process of forgiveness and what that means in our lives.

Welcome to the Darkwood Brew journey!

We are glad you can join us. Our primary resources for small group study are condensed versions of Darkwood Brew's weekly one-hour episodes. These are called GUIDED EPISODES. Each Guided Episode is 25-30 minutes in length. There are pause points with questions provided for each Episode, intended for group discussion or individual reflection.

On the following page, you will find information on the Series Topic, Skype Guests, Scripture passage, and Questions posed during the episode.



Questions:

1. Where do you think the authority to forgive comes from?
2. What stood out for you from Psalm 51:1-4 and 10-12?
3. Eric suggests that real repentance can require a complete change of thinking to bring us into better alignment with God's reality. How is that different than a traditional moralistic concept of sin and forgiveness?
4. Bruce says that refusal to forgive someone who has repented can create problems in our own relationship with God. What are some of those problems? Why do you think it is so important for us to forgive someone who repents?
5. How have you seen the process of forgiveness work in your life, in your community and in the world?

EPISODE TITLE: "By Whose Authority?"

Forgiveness, Episode 1

Featured Guest: Bruce Van Blair

Bruce's interests keep him going in several different directions including the startup of a new house church (now streamed live from our Countryside Chapel), and most recently joining the Countryside community to begin our new ministry "Converging Paths;" a partnership venture with the BTS Center in Bangor, Maine, exploring our vocational callings in our everyday workplaces, and our leadership in faith communities. Bruce has written a wide collection of sermons as well as several books, including *The Believer's Road*, and *In A Nutshell*.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Psalm 51: 1-4, 10-12

To the leader. A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

- ¹Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
- ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgement.
- ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
- ¹¹Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
- ¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.



EPISODE TITLE: "By Whose Requirement?"

Forgiveness, Episode 2

Featured Guest: Bruce Van Blair

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Questions:

1. Are we required to grant forgiveness whenever someone asks for it? If not, what might be a situation where it would be appropriate to refuse to forgive someone, even if they did ask?
2. What stood out for you from Matthew 18:21-35?
3. Bruce discusses three layers of forgiveness; stopping the damage, recovering our own value, and restoring relationship. Why is each of those important? What is unique about each one?
4. Eric suggests that there are four steps to forgiveness; rebuking, repentance, revoking and restoration. How do you see this process working? Which step might be hardest for you?
5. What do you think Eric means when he says forgiveness is messy? How does that play out in real human relationships? When should we forgive many times, and when should we refuse to forgive?

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Matthew 18:21-35

²¹Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' ²²Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'

²³'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

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Questions:

1. Eric mentioned a few situations where forgiveness is impossible. How might we act when forgiveness isn't an option, but healing is necessary?
2. What stood out for you from Matthew 5:39-47?
3. What happens when we get defensive or seek revenge? What are some ways we can heed Jesus when he calls us not to resist or return evil?
4. What do you see as the distinctions between for-harm-not and for-healing? What meaning do you find in Bruce's story of the yogi and the scorpion?
5. Eric and Bruce suggest that we engage in compassion and kindness as a way of life, as opposed to seeking a specific result. What difference does that make? What are some of the ways we find in our lives to avoid pain and reality?

EPISODE TITLE: "Kissing Cousins"

Forgiveness, Episode 3

Featured Guest: Bruce Van Blair

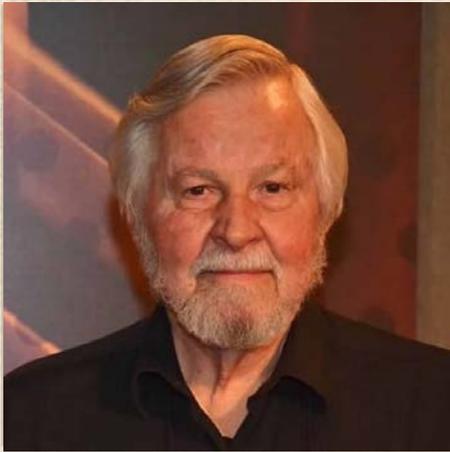
Bruce's interests keep him going in several different directions including the startup of a new house church (now streamed live from our Countryside Chapel), and most recently joining the Countryside community to begin our new ministry "Converging Paths;" a partnership venture with the BTS Center in Bangor, Maine, exploring our vocational callings in our everyday workplaces, and our leadership in faith communities. Bruce has written a wide collection of sermons as well as several books, including *The Believer's Road*, and *In A Nutshell*.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Matthew 5:39-47

³⁹But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; ⁴⁰and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; ⁴¹and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. ⁴²Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³"You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." ⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

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Questions:

1. What do you think about the idea of an unforgiveable sin? How does the concept of a sin that can't be forgiven fit into your thoughts about God's grace?
2. What stood out for you from Matthew 12:31-32, 1 John 1:8-10, and 1 John 2:1-6?
3. How do some individuals or groups come to feel that they live outside of God's grace, as if they have committed an unforgiveable sin? What damage does that cause?
4. Why is rejection of God's grace the unforgiveable sin? Does being unforgiveable mean that it can never be made right? If it can be made right, how does that happen?
5. What do you think it means when Bruce suggests that the Christian faith rests on "Forgiveness all the way down?"

EPISODE TITLE: "The Unforgivable Sin"

Forgiveness, Episode 4

Featured Guest: Bruce Van Blair

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Pneuma Divina Scripture: Matthew 12:31-32, 1 John 1:8-2:6

³¹Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

² My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

³Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments. ⁴Whoever says, 'I have come to know him', but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; ⁵but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: ⁶whoever says, 'I abide in him', ought to walk just as he walked.

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