

STEVEN L. THOMASON

SAINT MARK'S  
CATHEDRAL

SEPTEMBER 2019

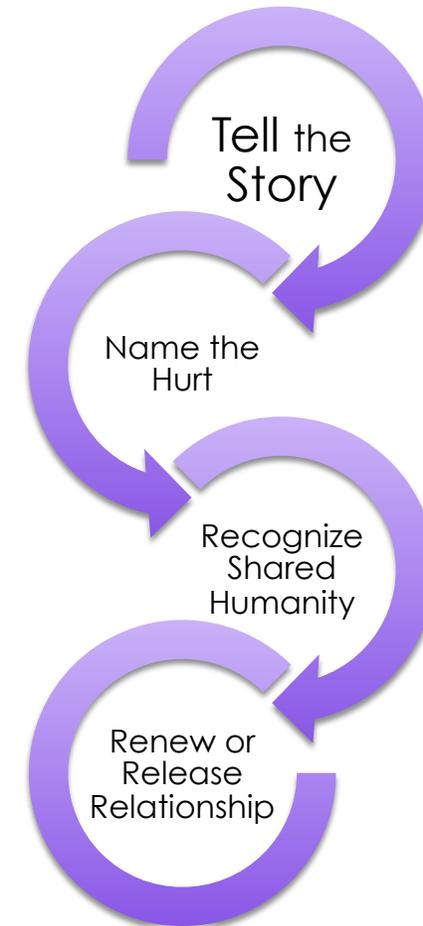
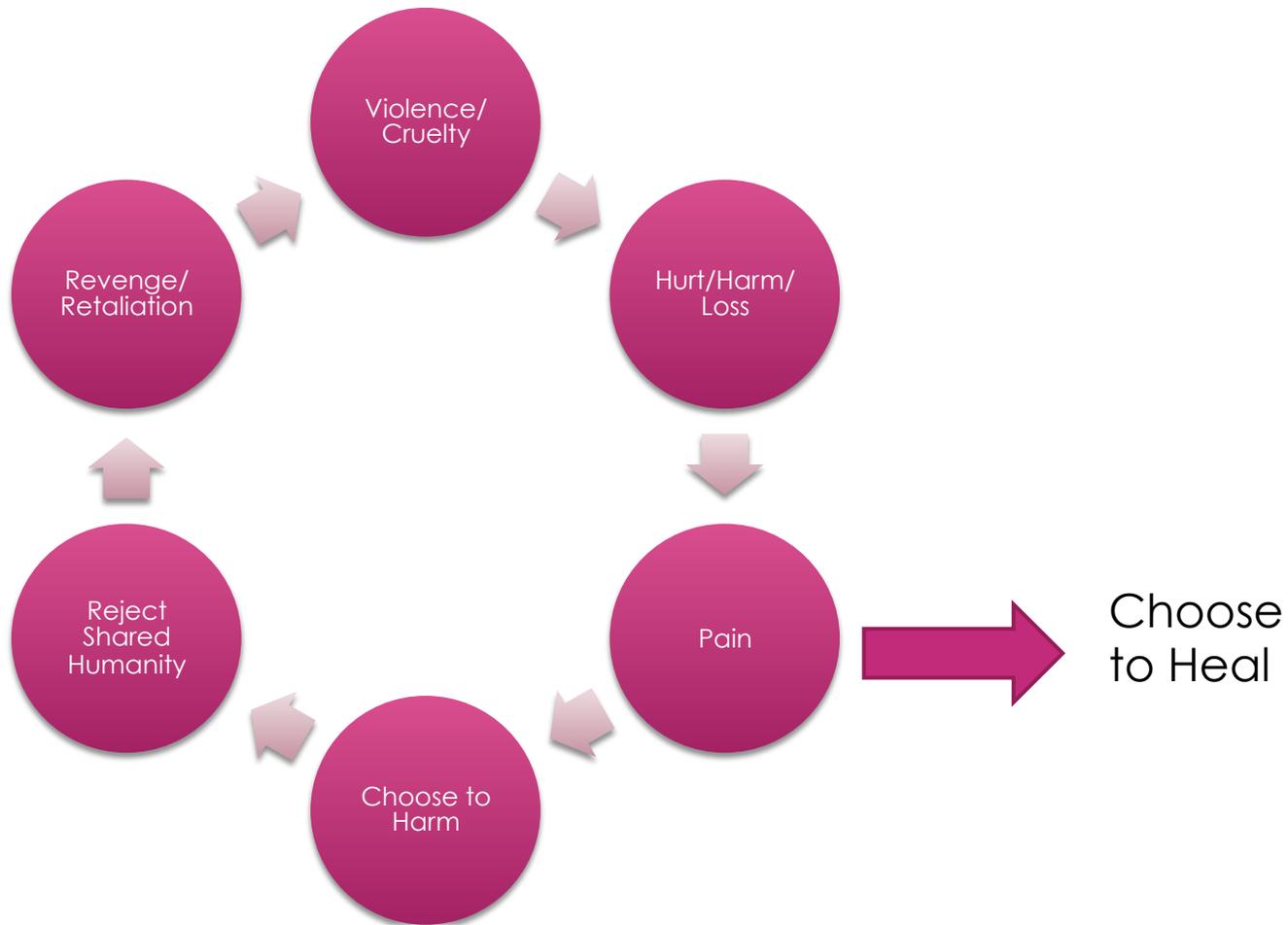
# The Art of Forgiveness Week 3:

## Seeking Forgiveness & Self- Forgiveness

# Overview of three-week series

- ▶ WHY FORGIVE? (the path of forgiveness is the way back to God)
- ▶ What forgiveness is; what it is not...
- ▶ A model to move away from “Revenge Cycle” into “Forgiveness Experience”
- ▶ How to approach the most difficult and challenging “opportunities” for forgiveness
- ▶ How to practice forgiveness of oneself
  
- ▶ Two presuppositions for the series (premised on our understanding of who God is)
  1. There is nothing that cannot be forgiven.
  2. There is no one who is inherently undeserving of forgiveness.

# Summary of Last Week



# Fourfold Path—Some general statements

- ▶ It is not always linear
- ▶ Not always predictable in speed with which you can work through the path
- ▶ Some parts may come easily; others very difficult
- ▶ It's okay to say "I need more time" or "I'm not there yet"
- ▶ "I am sorry" are very difficult words

# Active Listening Technique

1. Listen
2. Do not try to fix anything
3. Do not offer advice
4. Do not respond with your own loss or grief
5. Keep confidentiality (it's not your story)
6. Offer love and care
7. Empathize and offer comfort

# Table Conversation

- ▶ What has been most surprising, or striking, aspect to you in the first two weeks (or in the summary I just gave)?
- ▶ Have you ever noticed how so many plotlines for books, movies, plays involve revenge rather than forgiveness? Why is that such a prevailing motif in our culture?
- ▶ Do you believe there can be no healing without forgiveness?

# Seeking Forgiveness

- ▶ First, know it is hard work—sometimes asking for forgiveness is harder than granting it.
- ▶ Accept responsibility for our deeds
- ▶ Speak the truth (confess)
- ▶ Four steps to this work
  1. Admit the Wrong
  2. Witness the Anguish, Apologize
  3. Ask for Forgiveness
  4. Renew or Release the Relationship

# 1. How to Admit the Wrong

- ▶ Must be willing to answer any and all questions the victim may have.
- ▶ What, when, where, how, but also WHY?
- ▶ Avoid self-justification or excuses
  - ▶ Yes: I was thoughtless and selfish (takes responsibility)
  - ▶ NO: I was angry and not in my right mind (side steps responsibility)
- ▶ There will be consequences—accept them gracefully as a part of the healing process

## 2. Witness the Anguish, and Apologize

- ▶ Don't argue—hold the space
- ▶ Don't accuse back
- ▶ Acknowledge the harm you caused
- ▶ Don't justify your actions
- ▶ Answer all questions honestly and thoroughly
- ▶ Mean what you say (don't say you're sorry if that is empty—it will show)
- ▶ If you can't do it in person, write a letter, or consider an apology website
  - ▶ [Perfectapology.com](http://Perfectapology.com)
  - ▶ [Imsorry.com](http://Imsorry.com)
  - ▶ Call center: 347-201-2446

## 3. Ask for Forgiveness

- ▶ Be honest
- ▶ Express desire to do things differently
- ▶ Repent
- ▶ Make amends, restitution, reparations (don't skip this, may be difficult or painful)
- ▶ Assure victim it won't happen again

# What if they won't forgive?

- ▶ Do not force the issue
- ▶ Do not pressure them to forgive
- ▶ It may take time—a long time if betrayal was in an intimate relationship
- ▶ Make amends anyway/atone for your actions
- ▶ You work the fourfold path anyway

## 4. Renew or Release the Relationship

- ▶ Take the victim's lead
- ▶ It is not forgetting
- ▶ It is not going back to the way it was before

# Tandem Conversation

- ▶ Share a time when you have sought forgiveness. How did the other respond? What ultimately happened?

Or

- ▶ How have you felt when you sought forgiveness but the other was unable or unwilling to forgive you?

# Forgiving Yourself

- ▶ Many of us have deep-seated sense of inadequacy, low self-esteem, unworthiness (may be multi-factorial)
- ▶ Can you discover that shared humanity in yourself? That image of God's goodness?
- ▶ Guilt vs. Shame
- ▶ Self-forgiveness is not a free pass, or excuse, or rationalized avoidance of spiritual work
- ▶ We are not defined by what we have done (nothing is unforgiveable)
- ▶ Similar fourfold path—tell the truth, name the hurt, forgive, renew the relationship with yourself
- ▶ Consider Sacramental Rite of Reconciliation (Confession)

# Summarizing the Series

- ▶ Forgiveness is hard work
- ▶ It may not be linear, or predictable in its timeline, but it is the path to healing and peace
- ▶ It is our spiritual work!
- ▶ Be gentle with yourself, find compassion for the other, acknowledge your shared humanity
- ▶ Renew relationships whenever possible (and safe); release the relationship when not

# Homework assignment

Develop (or continue) a journaling practice reflecting on the work of forgiveness

Be about the work of healing through forgiveness—granted and received

# Selected Bibliography

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- ▶ Volf, Miroslav. *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*. Zondervan 2006.