

## Forgiveness and Punishment | Exodus 34:7 Sermon Discussion Leader's Guide

**Purpose of Discussion:** To discuss the relationship between God's forgiveness and punishment as found in Exodus 34:7.

**Sermon Refresher:** God has revealed to us that He is gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. But, as Dave talked about today, He is also serious about punishing sin; this punishment often comes through a "reaping what you sow" type of experience that impacts not only us, but also those around us. This reality is meant to point us to Christ, in whom we find an infinitely just and infinitely loving saviour.

**Icebreaker:** Tell about a time you experienced unnecessary panic and anxiety due to your circumstances.

**Transition:** The Bible's warning on God's punishment is not some type of "archaic, superstitious false alert" to cause unfounded panic and moral restraint. Rather, that he is infinitely serious about sin.

### **Discussion:**

1. Compare and contrast your initial reaction to the first portion of Exodus 34:5-8: "The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..." with the last the section: " But who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

# THE **crossing** **small groups**

2. List out some of the ways are culture has influenced the way we respond to both portions of this passage.
3. Despite the fact that for cultural reasons we may initially bristle at the reality God's justice and punishment toward our sin, the reality of God's justice should actually bring great comfort. Respond to the following two statements separately.

How would it make you feel if God had revealed himself only as a God of mercy and forgiveness with no commitment to dealing with evil and sin?

Contrarily, how does it make you feel to know that in addition to being a God of mercy and forgiveness, He has revealed himself as a God who is also serious about punishing evil and sin?

4. Dave listed ways that sin is its own punishment through the following examples....
  - Pride
  - The obsession to get rich
  - Adultery
  - Pornography
  - Lying
  - Self-righteousness

Pick one or two of these examples—or something else— and discuss how these sins can become their own punishments.

5. Dave compared our culture's view of Karma to the Biblical concept of reaping what you sow found in Galatians 6:7: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. People reap what they sow." He stated, "This kind of *passive* punishment is when God does *not* act to keep us from the evil consequences of our sin, and *that is* the punishment." Respond to the following questions;

Have you ever experienced in your own family the generational effect of sin patterns? If so, how has this has played out?

When in your own life have you experienced reaping the consequences of your sin or bad choices?

6. When we see God's justice for what it truly is and the effects of our sin more fully, we also more accurately understand our need for God's mercy and forgiveness. Dave stated that in Christ God forgives us *constantly* and *completely*. How can the reality of God's forgiveness motivate you in your daily life to fight sin?

**Sharing and Prayer:** Share about which aspect stood out to you more tonight, God's justice or mercy. Share about any new insights you might have gained from the discussion. Spend time as a group praising God for both his justice and mercy.