

SESSION 10: GOING FACE-TO-FACE

If you could sit across from the person/event that hurt you, what would you say? What would you want to hear?



PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING

Start class by practicing the deep breathing method discussed on page 28.

INTRODUCTIONS

Last week we talked about overcoming blame and creating alternative ways to think about negative situations.

- *Does anyone want to share what they learned from last week's discussion?*
- *Have you found yourself applying the steps of The Work to your thoughts around blame or any other prevalent thoughts in your life?*
- *What did you learn from tracking your coping strategies this last week?*

BEHIND THE SCENES

Fifteen years after two men broke into his family's house, raped his sister, and murdered his parents, Brooks met face-to-face with Glen Ake, the ring leader of the two assailants. Brooks describes that event as the single biggest turning point in his life since the night of the crime. He entered the meeting angry, vengeful, and unsettled. He left with a new sense of peace and purpose. In today's session, you will have a chance to say what you want to say to the person or event that brought trauma to your life.

MOVIE CLIP – Chapter 9: Going Face-to-Face

In this scene, we will see Brooks walking down the hall to meet Glen Ake, one of the men who raped his sister and murdered his parents. As you watch, imagine what you would be thinking if you were walking toward the person or event that caused your trauma. Then imagine what it would be like for you to sit across the table from the person/event who brought trauma to your life. *What would you want to say? What would you want to hear?*

THINK-PAIR-SHARE

[First, write responses to the questions below (*think*), then share your responses with a partner (*pair*), then discuss the questions as a group (*share*):

- 1) As Brooks walked down the hall to meet with Glen Ake, his mind flashed back to memories from the crime scene. If you were walking down that hall and your mind flashed back to traumatic event(s) of your life, what would you remember?

- 2) When you imagine walking down the hall toward the person or event that traumatized you, what emotions would you be feeling?

- 3) If you could sit across a table from the person or event that caused your trauma, what would you want to say?

- 4) If you could sit across the table from the person who traumatized you, what would you want him/her to say to you? (*If it was an event rather than a person, how do you wish it had gone differently?*)

CLASS DISCUSSION

In today's class, you will be given the same gift Brooks received—an apology. Brooks never, ever expected Glen Ake to be remorseful and apologetic. Yet, Glen's genuine change of heart opened a door for Brooks to feel a deep sense of relief and renewal. The person/event that wronged you may never feel remorse or have a chance to apologize, but today you will be given the apology you deserve.

FACE-TO-FACE ACTIVITY

Similar to the movie, you will sit across a table from your group leader and s/he will play the role of the person/event that wronged you. The group leader will be limited to saying only what Glen said in the movie, but you will be free to say whatever you want to say. If you are not ready to participate in this activity or would prefer to do it in private—that's OK. The decision is yours to make.

Glen said in the movie and in the real meeting with Brooks:

- "I just wanted to give you the chance to say what you wanted to say."
- "Do what you need to do because you are in the right and I'm in the wrong."
- "I am so, so sorry for what I did to you and your family."
- "I'm sorry."

[Take turns one at a time to meet face-to-face with the group leader.]

- **Who wants to go first?**

[After all group members who want to participate have had a turn with a Face-to-Face, discuss:]

- **How did it feel to say what you wanted to say?**
- **How did it feel to be apologized to?**

HOMEWORK

For homework, you will have an opportunity to continue the conversation with the person/event that brought trauma to your life. Use Handout 10.1 to write a letter to that person/event and share all that you want to say. After you write the letter, think about what you want to do with it. It may be beneficial to share it with the person or not. Or it may be therapeutic to literally bury the letter as a symbol of saying goodbye to that part of your life. Consider talking with your group leader and classmates about the best next step for letter after you write it.

[*NOTE: Many people ask if Glen Ake was genuinely remorseful or just pretending to be. Brooks says he believed Glen's apology was genuine and heartfelt. The real life confrontation happened over a 90-minute time period. During that time, Brooks kept waiting for Glen to drop his guard and show his true motives, but Glen remained steadily remorseful. Glen cried deep tears and struggled to wipe his tears with his handcuffs on. In their discussion, Glen said he had not had a single disciplinary incident since he found Christ eight years earlier. Brooks didn't believe that to be true, but when he asked the warden after their meeting, the warden checked the record, and it was true. It had been eight years since his last disciplinary write-up—which the warden said was a remarkable feat because inmates could be written up over minor incidents such as not making their beds. Glen evidenced a true change of heart and behavior.]

What was your life like before and after meeting with Glen Ake in the prison?



FROM BROOKS: As the years went by and I went through the trials, both literally and figuratively, I came to a place where I thought I had forgiven Ake and Hatch. At least I convinced myself I had. At the same time my life was in a constant state of chaos—in total shambles—although I was able to hold up a different picture of things to the world. I graduated from law school, got elected to the state senate, and things looked great. But I had pushed my finances, my marriage, my health, and everything else in my life to the breaking point. I kept myself busy with

work and activity to keep myself from thinking about what was going on inside me. This culminated in a divorce.

I authored victims' rights legislation and passed the bar exam. I started working out again every morning. One morning at the gym when I was on the bench press and needed that extra burst of strength, I went to a place I had never realized I had gone before. As I set the bar on the rack and sat up, I remember realizing that at that moment when I needed strength, I thought about Ake and Hatch and breaking them in half. It dawned on me that I went there regularly, although I had never realized or acknowledged it before. I made note of it.

A few months later I found myself at the prison, face-to-face with Glen Ake. I don't think I ever realized the amount of anger and rage that I carried until I was making the walk to that room to see him. I didn't know what would happen when I met with him but I can say that none of the possibilities I could think of were good. Forgiveness was something I didn't even consider. It was nowhere on the radar.

The meeting went for an hour and a half and I told him during the conversation that although my father had always taught me to forgive, that was not going to happen. I told him it was not within me to do that... it wasn't who I am. I got up and walked to the door and had my hand on the door handle to open it and walk out. I felt something in me say, "This isn't finished yet." I turned to him and walked back to the table. I said again, "My father always taught me that I should forgive, but... I forgive you".

At that moment I remember falling back into my chair and feeling like my body and head were full of water. It was poison. The feeling was so physical I could almost visibly see the bottoms of my feet open up and the water flooding out of them across the floor. I remember feeling at the same moment like someone took a clamp off my chest and being able to breathe again for the first time in 15 years. It was life-changing. When I walked out of the prison doors all my senses were heightened—the trees were greener and the sky was bluer than I had ever seen before. I was finally free.

I wish this kind of freedom for everyone. I also don't feel that it's my place to lay forgiveness at anyone else's feet. It's my job to tell my story. And as part of that, I understand that real forgiveness is hard and usually takes a long time. I also believe that if all we can muster is to be willing for God to make us willing, God honors that and will eventually bring us to that place. For me, it took 15 years and even then I didn't see it coming.

HANDOUT 10.1: SAY WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY

When Brooks met with Glen Ake, he was able to get angry, share his painful memories, speak up for his sister, ask questions, and ultimately feel a need to forgive Glen.

What do you want to say to the source of your trauma? Does she/he/it understand the severity of your suffering? Do you have questions? What do you want from this person/event? How can she/he/it ever help you feel more at peace? Is there any possibility for a feeling of forgiveness? What do you want to say to this person/event? And what do you need from her/him/it?

Write your thoughts in a letter. After you have written the letter, consider what would be best to do with the letter. *Can you share it with the person?* If not, consider burying your letter. Plan a ceremony similar to a funeral to say goodbye to that part of your life. Consider inviting friends, family, and groupmates to your ceremonial burial. If you are unsure about what to do with the letter, talk to your group leader about your ideas and any uncertainties.

*"I have never liked the term 'closure.' There will never be closure. But you can be set free."
~ Mother who forgave the man who killed her daughter*

[Intentional blank page. Designed to be copied double-sided.]