

## Week 4 – Forgiveness

January 24, 2021

Group Discussion Guide



(~90 minutes needed)

### Begin with 5 minutes of silence and prayer (7-10 minutes)

As you begin this week talking about following Jesus, start out with five minutes of prayerful silence.

*[Why silence? Our world is so busy, distracted, and bee-like, with technology filling in any gaps in between. With all that moving, it can be hard to hear others and hear the voice of God. As we gather together, let's press pause and enter into a moment of quiet so that we can hear what God is saying to us and through others.]*

Once you're finished with a few moments of quiet centering, have a specified person in the group pray this prayer from Thomas Merton; be sure to also pray for your group time together.

*My Lord God, we have no idea where we're going. We do not see the road ahead of us. We cannot know for certain where it will end, nor do we really know ourselves, and the fact that we think we're following Your will does not mean that we are actually doing so. But we believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And we hope that we have that desire in all that we are doing. We hope that we'll never do anything apart from that desire. And we know that if we do this, You will lead us by the right road, though we may know nothing about it. Therefore, we will trust You always, even though we may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. We will not fear, for You are always with us, and You will never leave us to face our perils alone. Amen.*

### Read this overview (1 minute)

We know everyone here is at a different place in their faith and growth looks very different on a case-by-case basis. What does it look like, though, to grow from wherever we are now to continually making disciples? **What's Next** will help us to unpack and highlight possible next steps.

This week, we're looking at forgiveness.

Jesus invites His followers to both receive His forgiveness and to offer forgiveness to those who have wronged us. He modeled forgiveness on the cross as He asked the Father to forgive those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34). Throughout the New Testament, as we will see, Jesus invites us to forgive as we have been forgiven.

Sometimes, when an offense is simple and easily overlooked, forgiveness comes freely. At other times, when we've been deeply wounded, it takes a bit more time and intentionality with Jesus to truly forgive. Lysa TerKeurst says, "Forgiveness is both a decision and a process. You make the decision to forgive the facts of what happened. But then you must also walk through the process of forgiveness for the impact those facts have had on you."<sup>1</sup> The decision to forgive doesn't fix all our damaged emotions. At times we need only to be willing to forgive, inviting Jesus to do the rest of the work in us.

This week, we cannot possibly *finish* the work of forgiveness, but with Christ, we can *begin* it.

### **Scripture and debrief in small groups (30 minutes)**

Split your group into triads to read the following Scriptures and debrief the sermon together.

- Do you find forgiveness an easy thing or a difficult thing to offer others?
- **Read Luke 7:36-50.** What parts of the Pharisee's attitude do you relate to? What is so compelling about the way Jesus interacts with this woman? How have you seen the correlation between forgiveness and love in your own life?
- **Read Colossians 3:13.** What does receiving forgiveness from God have to do with giving forgiveness to others? What does it look like to "bear with one another"?
- Think about a time someone forgave you. What did it feel like? Share the experience with the group.
- What effect does our forgiveness have on the unbelieving culture around us? How would forgiveness potentially expand the Kingdom of God? When have you seen someone truly move beyond forgiveness to blessing another?
- How has your understanding of forgiveness changed this week?
- What is your greatest fear when it comes to forgiveness?

### **Transition back to one large group for recap and this week's practice on forgiveness (30 minutes)**

- What were some insights that came from your smaller group discussions?

Walk through this simple listening exercise where you prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to lead you. We will be looking at two sides of forgiveness: being forgiven by God and discovering who you need to forgive.

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<sup>1</sup> TerKeurst, Lysa, *Forgiving What You Can't Forget* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Books, 2020), 45.

### **Part 1: Being Forgiven by God**

- Have someone invite the Holy Spirit to speak, allowing you to hear His voice as you listen.
- Ask the Holy Spirit:
  - Is there anything in my life for which I need to repent? (Allow ample time for everyone to sit with this question. Give space for people to confess something out loud if they feel led to do so.)
  - Is there anything in my life for which I haven't fully received God's forgiveness? (As people feel comfortable, have them share with their triad.)
- Spend time praying over those who need to receive or know the forgiveness of God in their lives. They don't need to go into detail or disclose any information. This is simply a space to invite the Spirit to heal and reveal the forgiveness that is theirs in Jesus.

### **Part 2: Who Do I Need to Forgive?**

- Have someone invite the Holy Spirit to reveal specific offenses, people, circumstances in which forgiveness needs to take place. (Give the Spirit ample time to speak and people time to listen.)
- It is important to record what you sense the Spirit speaking to you, so that you can take the time this week to process and pray through it. (Note: Tonight is not necessarily a space to forgive, but a time to begin a conversation with the Spirit about how we enter into our spiritual responsibility to forgive in light of the forgiveness we've received from God.)<sup>2</sup>

Throughout this week, explore what the Spirit has impressed upon you today. If you didn't hear anything from Him, ask Him again who you need to forgive. Remember, forgiveness is both a decision and a process. Invite God to help you in this practice.

If you want to dig deeper into the process of forgiveness, spend time with the separate Forgiveness practice this week.

### **Close with prayer (10 minutes)**

Finish your group session with prayer. You might want to ask someone in your group to write down everyone's prayer requests and then send them to the whole group for everyone to be praying through the week.

- What is on your heart that you need prayer for?
- Who in your life needs prayer?

Close your time together by praying in your triads. Thank God for the forgiveness He's already given you and spend time interceding for the requests that were shared.

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<sup>2</sup> This practice is adapted from <https://practictheway.org/forgive/part-one>. More information and additional practices can be found [HERE](#).

