

RHEMA WORD CHURCH INTERNATIONAL

FORGIVENESS

Participant Workbook

Understanding God's Grace, Healing Deep Wounds, and Walking in Freedom

Ephesians 4:32 (KJV) *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”*

THREE-SESSION BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Saturday, July 18, 2026 | 7:00-8:00 PM

Monday, July 20, 2026 | 8:30-9:00 PM

Saturday, July 25, 2026 | 7:00-8:00 PM

Prepared for the students of Rhema Word Church International

Welcome to the Study

This workbook is your companion for three focused sessions on biblical forgiveness.

SERIES PURPOSE

This study is designed to bring biblical clarity to forgiveness: what it is, what it is not, why believers are commanded to forgive, how to respond when the wound is deep, and how grace, justice, reconciliation, trust, and healthy boundaries work together.

Participant Information

Name:

Email or telephone (optional):

What do you most hope to understand about forgiveness?

Series Schedule

Session	Date and Time	Focus
1	July 18 7:00-8:00 PM	Forgiven by God, Called to Forgive
2	July 20 8:30-9:00 PM	The Inner Work of Forgiveness
3	July 25 7:00-8:00 PM	Forgiveness in the Hardest Situations

How to Use This Workbook

- Bring your Bible and this workbook to each session.
- Write key insights, questions, and personal reflections as the lesson is taught.
- Complete the exercises at your own pace. You are never required to disclose private trauma publicly.
- Use the homework pages for prayer, reflection, and preparation for the next session.
- Return to the final personal action plan whenever painful memories or new challenges arise.

A Safe Learning Covenant

Forgiveness must never be taught in a way that protects harm, silences pain, or pressures people into danger.

During This Study, We Agree That:

- ☐ No participant is required to reveal private wounds, names, or traumatic details.
- ☐ We will listen without shaming, blaming, correcting someone's emotions, or rushing their healing.
- ☐ Forgiveness does not require a person to remain in an abusive or dangerous environment.
- ☐ Reporting abuse, crime, threats, or exploitation is not unforgiveness.
- ☐ Seeking counseling, medical care, pastoral guidance, or legal help is not a sign of weak faith.
- ☐ Forgiveness may be offered while trust remains broken and reconciliation remains impossible.
- ☐ Healthy boundaries can be expressions of wisdom, stewardship, and love.
- ☐ We will distinguish conviction, which restores, from condemnation, which imprisons.

IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTE

When abuse, violence, coercion, stalking, threats, child endangerment, or criminal behavior is involved, prioritize immediate safety and qualified support. Forgiveness must never be used to demand secrecy or continued access.

My Commitment

With God's help, I will approach this subject honestly, prayerfully, and compassionately. I will respect the dignity of others and allow the Holy Spirit to work in my heart without comparing my healing process to someone else's.

Participant signature:

Date:

Series Goals and Starting Point

By the End of This Series, I Should Be Able To:

- ☐ Define forgiveness from a biblical perspective.
- ☐ Explain the theological foundation of forgiveness.
- ☐ Describe Old Testament teaching on mercy, atonement, confession, and pardon.
- ☐ Summarize what Jesus taught about forgiving others.
- ☐ Distinguish forgiveness from reconciliation, trust, justice, and forgetting.
- ☐ Respond wisely when the offender is unrepentant.
- ☐ Understand forgiveness as a decision that may involve a longer healing process.
- ☐ Address guilt, shame, regret, and self-condemnation biblically.
- ☐ Recognize cultural messages that distort forgiveness.
- ☐ Explain the unforgivable sin with biblical and pastoral clarity.

Pre-Study Inventory

Circle a number for each statement: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

1. I can clearly explain what biblical forgiveness means. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I understand the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I believe I can forgive while maintaining healthy boundaries. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I know how to respond when an offender refuses to repent. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I understand how God's forgiveness should shape my treatment of others. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I can recognize the difference between conviction and condemnation. 1 2 3 4 5

One question I am carrying into this study:

The Foundation: What Is Forgiveness?

WORKING DEFINITION

Biblical forgiveness is the grace-formed decision to release personal vengeance, surrender the debt to God, and refuse to nourish hatred, bitterness, or the desire to destroy the person who caused the injury.

Forgiveness Says:

- What happened was wrong.
- The pain was real.
- The offender may still be accountable.
- Consequences may still be necessary.
- I will not make revenge the ruler of my heart.
- I place final judgment in the hands of God.
- This offense will not separate me from God's will for my life.

Fill in the Core Truths

Forgiveness releases personal _____.

Forgiveness does not declare the offense _____.

Forgiveness entrusts final judgment to _____.

Forgiveness may be given before emotional _____ is complete.

Romans 12:19 (KJV) *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."*

What Forgiveness Is Not

Forgiveness Is Not...	Biblical Clarity
Pretending nothing happened	Truth is essential to healing. Scripture never requires us to call evil good.
Saying the behavior was acceptable	Mercy does not erase moral responsibility.
Forgetting every detail	Remembering is not the same as seeking revenge.
Immediate restoration of trust	Trust normally grows through truth, change, accountability, and time.
Automatic reconciliation	Reconciliation requires participation, safety, honesty, and willingness from both sides.
Removing all consequences	Forgiven people may still face discipline, restitution, or legal consequences.
Remaining in danger	Protection, distance, reporting, and boundaries may be necessary.
Refusing to feel pain	Pain may remain while forgiveness and healing are developing.

Four Essential Distinctions

Term	Meaning
Forgiveness	Releasing personal vengeance and surrendering the debt to God.
Reconciliation	Restoring a relationship through truth, repentance, and mutual participation.
Trust	Confidence in another person's character and behavior; it must often be rebuilt.
Justice	Confronting wrongdoing, protecting people, establishing accountability, and pursuing what is right.

Which distinction is most important for you to understand, and why?

SESSION ONE

Forgiven by God, Called to Forgive

MAIN LESSON TRUTH

The believer's forgiveness of others flows from the forgiveness that God has already extended through Jesus Christ.

Session Information

Date and time: Saturday, July 18, 2026 | 7:00-8:00 PM

Questions We Will Address

- What is the theological basis for forgiveness?
- What does the Old Testament say about forgiveness?
- What did Jesus teach about forgiving others?
- Is forgiveness a feeling or a choice?
- Does God always forgive our sins?

Primary Scriptures

Exodus 34:6-7 • Psalm 32 • Psalm 51 • Psalm 103:8-12 • Matthew 6:9-15 • Matthew 18:21-35 • Ephesians 1:7 • Ephesians 4:31-32 • 1 John 1:9

Opening Prayer Focus

What do you want God to reveal or heal during this session?

SESSION ONE

Forgiveness in the Old Testament

1. God Reveals Himself as Merciful

Exodus 34:6-7 *God identifies Himself as merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, while remaining just.*

Mercy is not a weakness in God's character. It is a holy expression of His goodness. Yet His mercy never requires Him to ignore guilt or redefine evil.

2. Sacrifice Demonstrates the Seriousness of Sin

- Sin creates guilt and separation.
- Atonement is costly.
- Cleansing must come from God.
- A substitute was necessary.
- The sacrificial system pointed forward to Jesus Christ.

3. Confession Opens the Heart to Mercy

Psalm 32 describes the heaviness of concealed sin and the relief of confession. Psalm 51 demonstrates repentance that accepts responsibility and asks God for inward cleansing.

4. God Removes Sin Completely

Passage	Picture	Truth
Psalm 103:12	East from west	God removes transgressions from the forgiven person.
Micah 7:19	Depths of the sea	God casts pardoned sins away.
Isaiah 43:25	Blotted out	God no longer holds forgiven sin as condemnation.

What do these Old Testament pictures teach you about God's mercy?

SESSION ONE

Old Testament Case Study: Joseph

Genesis 50:20 (KJV) *“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good...”*

Joseph did not deny his brothers' evil intentions. Forgiveness did not require him to rename their betrayal. He acknowledged the truth while recognizing that their sin could not cancel God's purpose.

Observe the Story

What wrong did Joseph's brothers commit?

What losses and years of pain followed?

How did Joseph respond when he gained power?

What evidence of wisdom and testing appears before full family restoration?

What does this story teach about God's ability to redeem harm?

KEY TRUTH

Forgiveness does not rewrite evil as good. It trusts God to write a greater conclusion than the offender intended.

SESSION ONE

The Theological Basis of Forgiveness

The Gospel Pattern

Truth	Meaning	My Response
God is holy	He cannot call evil good or ignore sin.	I take sin seriously.
Humanity is guilty	All have sinned and need mercy.	I approach others with humility.
Christ bore sin's penalty	The cross reveals justice and mercy together.	I receive forgiveness through faith.
Grace cannot be earned	Good works and self-punishment cannot purchase pardon.	I rest in Christ's finished work.
Forgiven people forgive	Grace transforms how believers respond to offenders.	I extend what I have received.

Ephesians 1:7 (KJV) *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."*

Why does remembering your own need for grace help you forgive others?

How does the cross hold justice and mercy together?

SESSION ONE

What Jesus Taught About Forgiveness

Passage	Teaching
Matthew 6:12	Forgiveness belongs in the regular prayer life of a disciple.
Matthew 6:14-15	A life that receives mercy but permanently rejects mercy reveals a serious contradiction.
Matthew 18:21-35	Kingdom forgiveness refuses to keep a revenge ledger.
Luke 23:34	Jesus modeled mercy while suffering injustice.
Matthew 5:43-48	Disciples pray for enemies and refuse to become shaped by hatred.

Choice and Feeling

Forgiveness normally begins as a choice of obedience. Emotional peace may follow gradually. The presence of pain does not necessarily mean forgiveness has failed.

Decisional Forgiveness	Emotional Forgiveness
I will not seek revenge.	God gradually reduces rage and hostility.
I surrender judgment to God.	The memory loses power to control the present.
I refuse to curse or destroy.	Rumination and obsessive replaying decrease.
I choose obedience while healing continues.	Compassion, peace, or emotional neutrality may grow.

Complete this prayer: "Lord, I do not feel ready, but I am willing to..."

SESSION ONE

Does God Always Forgive Our Sins?

God is abundant in mercy and completely able to forgive, but Scripture does not teach that every person is automatically forgiven while permanently rejecting Christ and refusing repentance.

Biblical Clarity

- Christ's sacrifice is completely sufficient.
- No sincere, repentant sinner who comes to Christ will be rejected.
- Forgiveness is received through repentance and faith, not earned through works.
- Believers are called to confess sin honestly and maintain fellowship with God.
- Forgiveness removes condemnation, but consequences and loving discipline may remain.
- God's grace does not make sin unimportant; grace cleanses and transforms us.

1 John 1:9 (KJV) *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Session One Review

Biblical forgiveness means...

Forgiveness is not...

The Old Testament teaches...

The cross shows...

Jesus calls believers to...

SESSION ONE

Session One Discussion and Homework

Group Discussion

1. Which incorrect definition of forgiveness has affected you most?
2. Why is forgiveness costly?
3. Why may consequences remain after forgiveness is given?
4. Can a person choose forgiveness while still experiencing pain?
5. What does the cross teach about justice and mercy?

Discussion notes:

Homework: Read and Reflect

Read Genesis 45:1-15; Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 51; Matthew 18:21-35; Ephesians 4:26-32.

What wound do I find most difficult to release?

What do I believe the offender owes me?

What would releasing personal vengeance look like?

Have I confused forgiveness with rebuilding trust?

What has God forgiven in my own life?

Session One Notes

Use this page for Scriptures, insights, questions, and prayer impressions.

SESSION TWO

The Inner Work of Forgiveness

MAIN LESSON TRUTH

Forgiveness does not demand that we deny the wound. It invites us to bring the wound into God's presence so that pain does not become permanent bondage.

Session Information

Date and time: Monday, July 20, 2026 | 8:30-9:00 PM

Questions We Will Address

- How do I forgive someone who hurt me deeply?
- What if I struggle to forgive myself?
- Is forgiveness a feeling or a choice?
- What are the psychological benefits of forgiveness?
- How does culture influence our understanding of forgiveness?

Primary Scriptures

Genesis 50:15-21 • Psalm 34:18 • Psalm 147:3 • Romans 8:1 • Romans 12:17-21 • 2 Corinthians 7:9-11 • 1 John 1:9 • John 21:15-19

Opening Prayer Focus

What do you want God to reveal or heal during this session?

SESSION TWO

How Do I Forgive Deep Hurt?

Deep wounds should not be treated with shallow answers. The Bible makes room for lament, tears, questions, righteous anger, protection, counseling, justice, and a gradual healing process.

THE R.E.L.E.A.S.E. PROCESS

A practical pathway for bringing deep pain into God's presence without denying truth or abandoning wisdom.

R - Recognize the Wound

Name what happened without minimizing it. Identify what was lost, violated, or changed.

My reflection:

E - Express the Pain to God

Bring anger, fear, betrayal, grief, and unanswered questions into honest prayer.

My reflection:

L - Lay Down Personal Revenge

Refuse to become controlled by retaliation or the desire to make the offender suffer.

My reflection:

E - Entrust Justice to God

Believe that God sees, judges rightly, exposes truth, protects, and convicts.

My reflection:

SESSION TWO

R.E.L.E.A.S.E. Continued

A - Act in Obedience

Refuse curses, revenge, destructive speech, and actions that keep hatred alive. Choose truth, prayer, and obedience.

One step I may need to take:

S - Set Wise Boundaries

Limit access, require accountability, seek counseling, involve leadership, or report abuse when necessary.

One step I may need to take:

E - Engage the Healing Process Repeatedly

Reaffirm forgiveness when memories, triggers, anniversaries, or new consequences reopen the wound.

One step I may need to take:

Questions That Help Name the Wound

What exactly hurt me?

What was taken from me?

What boundary was violated?

What belief about myself developed because of this?

What part of the offense continues to affect me?

SESSION TWO

Joseph: Forgiveness Without Denial

Joseph's story demonstrates that forgiveness can tell the truth, remember the evil intention, recognize God's providence, protect others, and still refuse revenge.

Truth and Redemption

Joseph Did Not...	Joseph Did...
Call evil good	Acknowledge that his brothers intended evil
Pretend there was no pain	Weep and process emotion
Use power for revenge	Use power to preserve life
Immediately ignore all risk	Observe and test changed behavior
Allow betrayal to define his destiny	Recognize God's greater purpose

What part of Joseph's response is most meaningful to you?

How can you acknowledge evil without allowing it to have the final word?

KEY TRUTH

What happened may be part of your story, but through the grace of God it does not have to become the ruler of your identity or the destroyer of your future.

SESSION TWO

When I Struggle to Forgive Myself

The deeper biblical issue is learning to agree with God's verdict after genuine confession and repentance. Receiving mercy does not mean avoiding responsibility; it means refusing to continue condemning what God has cleansed.

THE C.L.E.A.R. PROCESS

A biblical pathway from confession and responsibility to cleansing and restored purpose.

C - Confess Honestly

Name the sin without hiding, exaggerating, or shifting blame.

L - Learn From the Failure

Identify the patterns, ignored warnings, weaknesses, or boundaries that must change.

E - Embrace Christ's Cleansing

Receive God's forgiveness as a gift secured by Christ, not by self-punishment.

A - Accept Appropriate Consequences

Apologize, make restitution, correct falsehood, accept discipline, and rebuild credibility.

R - Refuse Continuing Condemnation

Do not allow shame to declare you hopeless after God has called you restored.

Which step is most difficult for you, and why?

SESSION TWO

Conviction or Condemnation?

Conviction	Condemnation
Identifies a specific sin	Attacks your entire identity
Calls you back to God	Tells you to hide from God
Produces repentance and change	Produces hopelessness and paralysis
Agrees with Scripture	Uses accusation without restoration
Leaves a pathway forward	Says your future is permanently destroyed
Is the Spirit's restoring work	Reflects the voice of accusation and shame

Romans 8:1 (KJV) *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..."*

Peter's Restoration

Peter denied Jesus three times. Jesus did not pretend the denial never happened. He addressed Peter, restored him, recommissioned him, and called him to continue serving. Failure became part of Peter's testimony, but it did not become the end of his calling.

What would receiving God's restoration look like in your life?

SESSION TWO

Emotional and Psychological Benefits

Forgiveness is first a spiritual and moral response to grace. Healthy forgiveness is also commonly associated with emotional benefits, especially when it includes truth, responsibility, safety, and wise support.

Healthy Forgiveness May Help Reduce:

- Anger and hostility
- Stress and emotional tension
- Anxiety and depressive symptoms
- Destructive rumination
- Obsessive replaying of the offense
- The desire for retaliation

Healthy Forgiveness May Help Increase:

- Hope
- Emotional peace
- Psychological well-being
- Freedom to move forward
- Healthier relationships
- A sense of spiritual integrity

BALANCED PERSPECTIVE

Forgiveness is not a guaranteed cure for trauma, depression, anxiety, grief, or physical illness. Counseling, medical treatment, pastoral care, legal protection, and long-term support may still be necessary.

What emotional burden would you like God to help you release?

SESSION TWO

How Culture Shapes Forgiveness

Our understanding of forgiveness is influenced not only by Scripture, but also by family systems, church traditions, community values, gender expectations, honor, shame, authority, historical trauma, and ideas about strength or weakness.

Some Cultures Emphasize...	Possible Strengths and Dangers
Personal peace and independence	Can support boundaries; may neglect communal restoration.
Family unity and harmony	Can protect relationships; may pressure victims to remain silent.
Respect for elders and leaders	Can encourage honor; may prevent necessary confrontation.
Public reputation and honor	Can motivate accountability; may hide wrongdoing to avoid shame.
Strength and emotional control	Can build endurance; may discourage honest grief or help-seeking.

Cultural Messages to Examine

- ☐ "Forgiveness is weakness."
- ☐ "Protect the family or institution at any cost."
- ☐ "A real Christian forgets immediately."
- ☐ "Never confront a leader or elder."
- ☐ "Reporting abuse proves bitterness."
- ☐ "An apology automatically restores trust."

What message about forgiveness did you learn from your family, church, or culture?

SESSION TWO

Session Two Reflection and Homework

Four-Column Reflection

Use brief words or phrases. Share only what feels safe and appropriate.

What Happened?	What Did It Cost Me?	What Am I Releasing?

What Boundary or Action May Be Needed?

- ☐ A truthful conversation
- ☐ Counseling or pastoral support
- ☐ Distance or reduced contact
- ☐ Restitution or accountability
- ☐ Legal or safety assistance
- ☐ No contact
- ☐ Gradual rebuilding of trust
- ☐ Prayer and continued healing

My next wise step:

My prayer before Session Three:

Session Two Notes

Use this page for Scriptures, insights, questions, and prayer impressions.

SESSION THREE

Forgiveness in the Hardest Situations

MAIN LESSON TRUTH

God commands unlimited mercy, but unlimited mercy does not mean unlimited access, unlimited trust, or the absence of accountability.

Session Information

Date and time: Saturday, July 25, 2026 | 7:00-8:00 PM

Questions We Will Address

- How many times should I forgive someone?
- Is it healthy to forgive an unrepentant person?
- Can a person forgive without reconciliation?
- Does forgiveness mean continued access?
- What is the unforgivable sin?
- How do believers maintain a lifestyle of forgiveness?

Primary Scriptures

Matthew 5:43-48 • Matthew 6:14-15 • Matthew 18:15-35 • Mark 3:22-30 • Mark 11:25 • Luke 17:3-4 • Romans 12:17-21 • Hebrews 12:14-15

Opening Prayer Focus

What do you want God to reveal or heal during this session?

SESSION THREE

How Many Times Should I Forgive?

Matthew 18:21-22 *Jesus moves Peter away from keeping a forgiveness score and toward the character of a mercy-shaped disciple.*

“Seventy times seven” is not a calculator that identifies the moment revenge becomes acceptable. Jesus teaches that kingdom forgiveness does not keep a ledger for the purpose of nurturing retaliation.

Repeated Forgiveness Does Not Mean Repeated Exposure

Situation	Wise Response
Money repeatedly misused	Forgive, but stop lending money.
Private information repeatedly exposed	Forgive, but stop sharing confidential matters.
Ongoing abuse	Forgive from a place of safety; maintain separation and seek protection.
Dishonest employee	Forgive, but allow appropriate employment consequences.
Unaccountable leader	Forgive, but require investigation, oversight, and protection of others.

KEY TRUTH

Forgiveness removes revenge from the heart; wisdom may remove access from the offender.

Why is this distinction important?

SESSION THREE

The Unforgiving Servant

Matthew 18:23-35 tells of a servant released from an enormous debt who later refused mercy over a much smaller debt. The parable exposes the contradiction of celebrating received grace while permanently refusing to extend any grace.

Five Lessons From the Parable

1. Our debt before God is greater than we usually understand.
2. God's mercy toward us should transform our treatment of others.
3. Receiving mercy while refusing all mercy is spiritually serious.
4. Unforgiveness can become a form of bondage.
5. Forgiveness must reach beyond religious language into the heart.

Which lesson confronts or encourages you most?

What does the parable reveal about the size of God's mercy?

SESSION THREE

Forgiving an Unrepentant Person

Scripture calls believers to release bitterness and personal vengeance. Scripture also connects full relational restoration with repentance, truth, and change. These truths must be held together.

Heart-Level Release	Relational Restoration
Can begin without the offender's cooperation	Requires participation from both sides
Releases personal revenge	Requires honesty and recognition of wrongdoing
Entrusts judgment to God	Requires repentance and changed behavior
Refuses hatred and retaliation	May require restitution and accountability
Prays for conviction and protection	Requires rebuilding trust over time

It Is Not Healthy to Use Forgiveness To:

- Remain in danger
- Deny ongoing abuse
- Silence victims
- Remove every consequence
- Restore access without evidence of change
- Prevent legal authorities from becoming involved
- Force a destructive relationship

Write a prayer that releases revenge while asking God for truth, protection, and justice:

SESSION THREE

Can I Forgive Without Reconciliation?

ANSWER

Yes. Forgiveness may be one-sided. Reconciliation is a shared process that requires truth, repentance, willingness, wisdom, and safety.

Reconciliation May Not Be Possible When:

- The offender has died or cannot be located.
- The offender denies everything or refuses communication.
- The harmful behavior continues.
- Contact would create danger.
- The offender uses reconciliation language to regain control.
- Legal restrictions prohibit contact.

Reconciliation Is More Likely When There Is:

- ☐ Genuine repentance
- ☐ Honest confession
- ☐ Empathy for the wounded person
- ☐ Willingness to hear the damage caused
- ☐ Restitution where possible
- ☐ Changed behavior
- ☐ Accountability
- ☐ Respect for boundaries
- ☐ Patience with rebuilding trust

John 2:24 *Jesus loved people, yet He did not entrust Himself to everyone. Love and wisdom belong together.*

SESSION THREE

Forgiveness, Trust, Access, and Boundaries

Use this page to distinguish what God may require in your heart from what wisdom may require in the relationship.

Area	Questions to Ask	My Present Decision
Forgiveness	Have I surrendered personal revenge to God?	
Trust	Has the person demonstrated honesty and change?	
Access	What level of contact is safe and wise?	
Accountability	Who should know, oversee, or intervene?	
Restitution	What repair is possible or appropriate?	
Reconciliation	Are both people willing and is restoration safe?	

Boundary Sentence Practice

"I forgive you, but I am not ready to..."

"For trust to be rebuilt, I need..."

"For my safety and healing, I will..."

"I will not participate in..."

"We can communicate through..."

SESSION THREE

What Is the Unforgivable Sin?

In Mark 3:22-30 and Matthew 12:22-32, religious leaders witnessed works done through the Holy Spirit and deliberately attributed the Spirit's work to Satan. Jesus warned them about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

It Is Not Best Understood As:

- An accidental statement
- An intrusive thought
- A question during doubt
- A careless phrase followed by genuine repentance
- A confessed sin brought sincerely to Christ

It Is Best Understood As:

A hardened, willful, knowing, and persistent rejection and slander of the Holy Spirit's witness concerning Jesus Christ. The person refuses the truth that would lead them to repentance and forgiveness.

PASTORAL ENCOURAGEMENT

A person who grieves over sin, desires Christ, wants to repent, and reaches for mercy should not automatically assume they have committed the unforgivable sin. Their concern may indicate a conscience that is still responsive to God.

How would you explain this teaching compassionately to someone who is afraid?

SESSION THREE

Case Studies: Apply the Teaching

Case One: The Unrepentant Relative

A family member repeatedly spreads damaging information and refuses to apologize.

What would forgiveness look like?

What would forgiveness not require?

What boundary may be appropriate?

What must happen before trust is restored?

Case Two: Financial Betrayal

A trusted friend borrowed money, lied about repayment, and continues asking for more.

Can the lender forgive and refuse another loan?

Would refusing more money be unforgiving?

What role should restitution and accountability play?

SESSION THREE

Case Studies: Apply the Teaching

Case Three: Church Hurt

A person was publicly humiliated by a church leader. The leader refuses to acknowledge the harm.

Should the person be forced to remain under that leader?

Can they forgive while worshiping elsewhere?

What accountability should exist?

How can a church avoid using forgiveness to silence the wounded?

Case Four: Self-Condensation

A believer has repented of a past sin but continues saying, "God may forgive me, but I will never forgive myself."

Is this humility or continuing condemnation?

Has the person accepted responsibility?

Is restitution needed?

How can Romans 8:1 and 1 John 1:9 help?

Session Three Notes

Use this page for Scriptures, insights, questions, and prayer impressions.

My Personal Forgiveness Plan

PURPOSE

This plan is not permission to minimize harm. It is a prayerful tool for surrendering revenge, receiving healing, and identifying the wise next step.

1. The wound I am bringing to God:

2. The truth about what happened:

3. What the offense cost me:

4. What I believe the offender owes me:

5. What I am choosing to release to God:

6. The boundary, protection, or accountability I may need:

7. The trusted support person I may contact:

8. The Scripture I will stand on:

My Forgiveness Prayer and Next Steps

A Prayer of Release

Father, what happened was wrong, and You know the full cost of it. I refuse to call evil good, but I also refuse to allow revenge to rule my heart. I surrender this debt and this person into Your hands. Judge rightly, reveal truth, protect the vulnerable, convict the offender, and heal me. Give me wisdom concerning boundaries, accountability, and any future relationship. Through Jesus Christ, teach me to walk in freedom, truth, mercy, and courage. Amen.

Write this prayer in your own words:

My Next Three Steps

Within 24 hours, I will:

Within one week, I will:

For continued healing, I will:

Someone I can ask to pray with me:

Quick-Reference Answers

Question	Biblical Summary
How do I forgive deep hurt?	Tell the truth, lament before God, release personal revenge, seek help, set boundaries, and continue the healing process.
What if I struggle to forgive myself?	Confess, repent, repair what can be repaired, receive Christ's cleansing, and refuse continuing condemnation.
How many times should I forgive?	Without keeping a revenge ledger; repeated forgiveness does not require repeated exposure.
What does the Old Testament teach?	God is merciful and just; sin is serious; atonement is costly; confession and repentance matter; God removes guilt.
Feeling or choice?	It normally begins as a choice. Emotional healing may follow gradually.
Forgive an unrepentant person?	Release revenge and bitterness, but do not deny danger or restore access without change.
Forgive without reconciliation?	Yes. Reconciliation requires mutual participation, truth, repentance, safety, and rebuilt trust.
Psychological benefits?	Healthy forgiveness may reduce anger, stress, and rumination while increasing hope and peace.
Theological basis?	God forgives through Christ; forgiven people are called to extend mercy.
Cultural influence?	Family and culture shape ideas about honor, shame, authority, boundaries, and restoration; Scripture must examine them.
What did Jesus teach?	Forgive repeatedly, pray for enemies, confront sin wisely, and remember God's immeasurable mercy.
Does God always forgive?	God receives the repentant who come through Christ; Scripture does not teach automatic forgiveness apart from receiving grace.
Unforgivable sin?	Hardened, persistent rejection and slander of the Holy Spirit's witness to Christ.

Final Review and Growth Check

Circle a number for each statement: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

1. I can clearly explain what biblical forgiveness means. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I understand the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I believe I can forgive while maintaining healthy boundaries. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I know how to respond when an offender refuses to repent. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I understand how God's forgiveness should shape my treatment of others. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I can recognize the difference between conviction and condemnation. 1 2 3 4 5

The clearest truth I learned:

The belief I need to change:

The practice I will begin:

The question I still want to study:

Forgiveness Glossary

Term	Meaning
Atonement	God's provision for dealing with sin and restoring relationship; fulfilled ultimately through Christ.
Bitterness	Resentment that is repeatedly nourished until it shapes attitudes, speech, and behavior.
Confession	Agreeing with God about sin and naming it honestly.
Conviction	The Holy Spirit's work of exposing sin in order to lead a person toward repentance and restoration.
Forgiveness	Releasing personal vengeance and surrendering the moral debt to God.
Justice	The righteous confrontation of wrongdoing and protection of what is good.
Lament	Honest prayer that brings grief, anger, confusion, and pain into God's presence.
Reconciliation	The rebuilding of relationship through truth, repentance, and mutual participation.
Repentance	A change of mind and direction that turns from sin toward God and produces changed behavior.
Restitution	Repairing or repaying damage where possible.
Trust	Confidence in character and behavior; it is built and may need to be rebuilt.
Vengeance	The desire or action of personally repaying harm with harm.

Memory Verses and Closing Prayer

Session Memory Verses

Ephesians 4:32 (KJV) *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”*

Romans 12:19 (KJV) *“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves... Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”*

Colossians 3:13 (KJV) *“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another... even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”*

Closing Communal Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus, thank You for the mercy You have shown us. Heal every heart wounded by betrayal, rejection, abandonment, abuse, dishonesty, humiliation, neglect, and broken trust. Teach us to forgive without denying truth, to release vengeance without abandoning justice, and to establish boundaries without allowing bitterness to take root. Where guilt remains after repentance, help us receive the cleansing of Christ. Where reconciliation is possible, produce humility, restitution, accountability, and changed behavior. Where restoration is unsafe or impossible, grant peace, protection, courage, and wisdom. Do not allow the sins of others to determine the condition of our spirits. Make us tenderhearted without making us careless, merciful without making us vulnerable to repeated destruction, and wise without making us bitter. As You have forgiven us through Christ, give us strength to forgive. In Jesus’ name, amen.

My final prayer or commitment:
