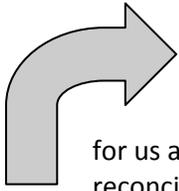


**Road Map for Relationships**  
*Week Four Study Guide*  
**Journey of Forgiveness—Part I**



The *Road Map for Relationships* is taking a turn into challenging territory. Some of our thinking may be turned sideways or upside down!

Our journey started several weeks ago at the place of recognizing God's great love for us and His plan to be in relationship with His children. Jesus made the way for us to be reconciled with God and asks us to join Him in the ministry of reconciliation—restoring mankind's relationships with God and with one another.

As we see in Jesus' example, reconciliation requires forgiveness, and forgiveness is usually difficult and costly work. Jesus was willing to forgive us; may we be willing to join in His suffering to extend forgiveness to others. After all, there's only one thing that costs more than forgiveness. It's unforgiveness.

So get out your Road Map, the Bible, and let's hit the road! Get ready for a sharp turn into freedom.

**Day One**

1. Read Matthew 6:9-13.

In this scripture, Jesus is teaching us how to pray. He is "cracking the code" of heaven—sharing the ways of the kingdom and letting us in on how to bring heaven to earth. And right away, we see that in God's kingdom, forgiveness really is a big deal. In God's kingdom, forgiveness is mandatory.

a) Write out verse 12.

**Forgive:** to send away, to let go, give up a debt (from *Strong's*); to stop being angry about or resenting somebody or somebody's behavior; to cancel an obligation such as a debt (*Encarta Dictionary*)

b) Using your own words, write a definition of forgiveness.

c) Ask the Lord why forgiveness is a priority in heaven.

2. Read Matthew 6:14,15 in your Bible, and then read it below from *The Message*.

*In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do.  
You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others.  
If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part. (Matthew 6:14,15--The Message)*

a) What is the warning given in these verses?

*This does not mean we can earn God's forgiveness through our own forgiving but that we can disqualify ourselves from it. No heart that is truly repentant toward God could be unforgiving toward others.  
A lack of forgiveness toward others is the direct result of a lack of repentance toward God.\**

b) What beliefs in our culture might challenge us from taking up this command?

3. Read Ephesians 4:32. What's one reason we forgive?

4. a) Read Luke 23:34, Jesus' words to His Father from the cross. Write out the words, inserting your own name for "them."

b) It's as if we were there, at the crucifixion--our sin contributing to Jesus' suffering. And in the midst of His pain, Jesus cried out to His Father on our behalf. Perhaps you'd like to pray:

*Father, I think my heart has room for expansion. Actually, I'd like a heart like Yours. Help me receive in new ways the work You did on the cross, and empower me to pass it on to those in my life. (Pray the Lord's Prayer.)*

**Day Two** Read Matthew 18:21-35.

5. a) How often are we to forgive?  
b) If you think you've made too many mistakes for God to forgive, what does verse 22 reveal about God's character?
6. a) In verse 23, to what is the kingdom of heaven compared?  
b) One talent was more than fifteen years' wages of a laborer. Why do you think Jesus used this large amount to represent the slave's debt?  
c) How did the slave respond to the judgment the king made against him?  
d) How did the king respond and why?  
e) What did it cost the king to forgive his slave?
7. The fellow slave owed the forgiven slave about 4 months' wages. What are possible reasons the forgiven servant refused to be a forgiver?

8.  **Road Trip Vista:**

a) It appears that immediately the forgiven servant *forgot* how he had been blessed. What about us? Do we tend to forget God's goodness in the midst of our daily lives? Do we treat others as we have been treated by God? Ask God for His perspective and write down at least 5 ways you have been treated well by God this week.

b) Then pray: *Lord, may I treat others the same way You treat me.* End your prayer with the Lord's Prayer.

**Day Three** Re-read Matthew 18:21-35.

9. a) What did the king call the slave in verse 32?  
b) Why do you think he reacted so strongly?  
c) What happened to the slave as a result of his unwillingness to forgive?  
d) What type of torment (or torture) do people experience who are unwilling to forgive? There can be physical, emotional, and spiritual torment.  
e) Can you think of a time you were set free from the work of a "torturer" when you chose to forgive?
10. The slave was thrown into prison, not because of the debt he owed, but because of his unforgiving heart. What does it mean to forgive "from your heart" (*Heart*: the center of all physical and spiritual life {*Strong's*})?

11.  **Road Trip Vista:**

a) Read Luke 6:44-46. The NASV uses the word "treasure" (good treasure and evil treasure) for what we store in our hearts. Ask the Lord for insight as to why that word is used.

b) Draw two hearts on the back of a page, one holding unforgiveness, and the other after choosing to forgive. Draw what comes out of those hearts as well.

{ Frederick Buechner wrote that of all the deadly sins, resentment *appears* to be the most *fun*.  
You can lick your wounds and savor the pain you will give back --a feast fit for a king!  
But then it turns out that what you are eating at the banquet of bitterness is your own heart.  
You start out holding a grudge, but in the end the grudge holds you. }

c) Which heart do you choose? Tell the Lord in prayer, and then pray the Lord's Prayer.

#### **Day Four**

12. Forgiveness is always extremely costly. In what ways did Christ suffer in order for your sins to be forgiven? (*Scenic Side Road:* Read Mark 14:32-Mark 15 to refresh your memory or if this is new to you.)

13. a) Read Mark 8:34,35. In Jesus' day, prisoners carried their own crosses to the place of execution as a sign of submitting to Roman authority. What do you think Jesus meant when He said in order to follow Him, we must:

- deny ourselves?
- take up our cross?

b) How do we save our lives by losing them?

c) How does this relate to forgiveness?

14. Read 1 Peter 2:21. Peter is writing about the kind of suffering that comes from doing good.

a) What example did Christ set for forgiveness?

b) In many places in the Bible we are invited to join in Christ's suffering. How does this happen when we choose to forgive?

{ *On the cross we see God forgiving us, and that was possible only if God suffered.  
On the cross God's love satisfied his own justice by suffering, bearing the penalty for sin.  
There is never forgiveness without suffering, nails, thorns, sweat, blood. Never.\** }

15. Pray: *Lord, from today's lesson, how do You want to transform my thinking to align with Your thinking?*

(Write down what you hear and then pray the Lord's Prayer.)

#### **Day Five**

16. Read Hebrews 12:1-3.

a) How did Jesus endure the suffering on the cross?

b) What came after the suffering?

c) Ask God what your invitation is in these verses.

17. Read Romans 8:16-18.

a) What blessings are revealed in these verses about being a child of God?

b) Can you think of other blessings available to God's children?

c) In these verses, what difficulty comes with being a child of God, and what is its outcome?



*Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning. --Psalm 30:5*

*On both a theological and a practical level, forgiveness is at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian.  
True forgiveness comes at a cost and is pursued intentionally within a community of believers.\**

19. Spend a few minutes in prayer. Are you willing to pursue forgiveness—to be a forgiver? Yes, it is costly. But great things are birthed from suffering and sacrifice. Share what's on your heart with the Lord, and listen to His response. He's gone ahead to prepare the way. End your time by praying the Lord's Prayer.

**Notes:** Forgiveness is not excusing, forgetting, or even reconciling. But it is giving up the right to get even, and it is looking at things with God's perspective. Our journey of forgiveness continues next week. Stay on the road!

(\*quotes by Dr. Timothy Keller)