

Road Map for Relationships
Week Five Study Guide
Journey of Forgiveness—Part II

Forgiveness is not a feeling, it's a choice. –Kris Vallotton

So which route are we going to choose? The one with detours through bitterness, resentment, and isolation—or the one offering freedom, wholeness, and connection to God and others?

Fortunately we are not left on our own to figure it out or to try to muster up forgiveness--we have been given a Helper, the Holy Spirit. And since forgiveness is such a high priority in heaven, the Holy Spirit will lead us down the road of forgiveness, for this is the road Jesus walks on. He modeled how to live—forgive, don't condemn, and be willing to suffer and lay down your rights. Yes, Jesus forgave and gave His life so the world might be saved through Him (John 3:17). This is very good news.

We have been reconciled to God through Christ--through forgiveness--and given the ministry of reconciliation which always begins with forgiveness. Just as we're required to learn to swim before we go in the deep end of the pool, we are required to learn to forgive to live a life of freedom in Christ.

We are ambassadors of Christ, and what is important to Him and to the kingdom of God, we are to represent to the world. Forgiveness is important. It's the road that leads to peace. It's the road that leads to relationship.

Day One

1. Read Matthew 6:9-13. Begin your study by praying the Lord's Prayer.

As Jesus teaches us how to pray, He communicates the priorities of heaven. And now it's up to us. If we want to live with internal peace and rest, we must align our priorities with those of Jesus, for it is in Him that we find what we're looking for.

Last week we learned that forgiveness is a really big deal to Jesus. In fact, He makes it mandatory as a part of living in right relationship with Him. This week we will be given the opportunity to put forgiveness into practice. Let the scriptures we read last week sink in to the deep places of your spirit as we look at them again, meditate on them, and apply them to our lives. God's Word is living and active. Watch for Him to bring more depth to these verses.

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

a) Look at verse 12. What does it mean to ask forgiveness of our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors?

b) Ask the Lord why He requires us to forgive others. Write down what comes to mind.

2. a) Read Matthew 26:27,28. What is necessary for the forgiveness of sins?

b) Read Ephesians 1:7. Forgiveness is given to us through the blood of Christ. Ask the Lord what the "riches of His grace" entail.

c) Read Hebrews 9:22. According to this verse, what is needed for the cleansing of sin?

d) Read Hebrews 10:10-12. (*Scenic Side Road:* Read Hebrews 10:1-18.) What did Christ's sacrifice cover?

e) Every sin that has and will be committed has been covered by the blood of Christ. What would keep you from taking that forgiveness and passing it on to another? Your blood is not required. Another has gone ahead and taken care of the redemption price. Respond to the Lord in a written prayer. What do you say?

Day Two Pray: *Holy Spirit, give me a forgiving heart—a heart like Yours.*

3. Read Matthew 18:21-35.

a) In what ways does the king's response affect the way his kingdom functions?

b) If the king had ignored the servant's treatment of his fellow servant who was indebted to him, what effect would that have on his kingdom?

c)  **Road Trip Vista:** Ask: *Lord, how does a person's unwillingness to forgive affect the atmosphere here on earth? How does it affect the atmosphere in my country? In my state? In my city? In my workplace? In my home? In my heart? (Write down what the Lord shows you.)*

{ *You can remain bitter toward someone only if you feel superior, if you are sure that you "would never do anything like that." To remain unforgiving means you are unaware of your own sinfulness and need for forgiveness. —Dr. Timothy Keller* }

4. Read Matthew 9:1-8.

a) Jesus said to the man, "Your sins are forgiven...get up..." In what ways might we be paralyzed or hindered by unforgiveness?

b) Pray: *Lord, is unforgiveness or irritation with someone keeping me from living in wholeness, peace, and freedom in any way? Whom do I need to forgive and what is it costing me? (We will look at this more in Day Four.)*

5. Read Psalms 103: 8-11. Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight a verse for you. Then ask Him to show You more about it.

Day Three Pray: *Holy Spirit, give me a forgiving heart—a heart like Yours. Enable me to be merciful.*

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth just makes us all blind and toothless. —Ray Moore

Aren't we glad we live in New Testament times where, because of God's mercy, we don't always get what we deserve? Now we too extend mercy and undeserved forgiveness to others.

6. Read Isaiah 53:4-6, a prophecy about Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak personally to you. What does He want you to see through these verses? Write it down, and then respond to God.

7. Read Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 1:7,8.

a) What do these scriptures say about sin?

b) What do they say about the character of God?

Forgiveness is acknowledging that a wrong occurred. It is not excusing the sin or saying, "It's okay." It is being honest before God. We tell God how the person we're forgiving hurt us. We tell Him what the hurtful words or actions cost us, and then we choose to cancel the debt we think the person owes us. We pass on the forgiveness Jesus gave us, extend it to our debtors, and discover that as we set them free, we come into freedom as well.

8.  **Road Trip Vista:**

a) Ask God to reveal the name or face of anyone you're holding unforgiveness toward—someone who has hurt you in little or big ways. Perhaps you are holding unforgiveness toward a person who has hurt someone you love or toward someone who is difficult for you to be around. Write down a name or initials.

b) Ask God to show you what you think this person "owes" you—what they have to do to make things right.

c) Thank God for His love for you, for the power of the Holy Spirit in you, and for leading you to repentance. We will continue this exercise on Day Four.

Day Four Pray: *Holy Spirit, give me a forgiving heart—a heart like Yours. Empower me to forgive.*

9. a) Read Luke 23:34, Jesus' words to His Father from the cross. Write out the words. If there is someone in your life you want to forgive, insert his/her name in place of "them."

b) It is time to extend to others the forgiveness we have received. Consider praying:

Father, I want to live like Jesus lived, forgiving those who have wronged me and asking You to do the same.

10. a) Look back at questions 4b and 8a and choose one person to forgive. If you haven't written down a name, is there anyone you think is taking advantage of you or has it easier than you do? We often hold resentment in these places. Today, choose to forgive.

b) Continue praying: *I forgive* (name of person) *for* (what they did or didn't do—be specific) .
(Then in prayer, tell the Lord how this hurt you and what it cost you (such as pain, ability to trust, honor, etc.)

Now, I choose to forgive the debt that (name) *owes me. He/she no longer needs to* (for example: apologize, make it up to me, suffer the same hurt, etc.).

I'm not pretending that what happened was okay or right. But I cancel the debt. The balance owed to me is zero. If Satan brings it to mind, I can say, "I've forgiven him/her. You'll have to take it up with God."

I give up my right to hold on to this wrong, to dwell on it, and to talk negatively about it with others. Lord, if You want me to bring this up with this person at some time, let me know. And then show me when.

(Note: Forgiveness does not release someone from the consequences of their actions. In a few weeks we will look at how to confront wrong or hurtful behavior in a healthy way.)

c)  **Road Trip Vista:** Now, in prayer, walk this person to Jesus and hand him/her over. You are no longer tied to this person through unforgiveness. What does Jesus do? What does He say to you? Write it down and respond to your Lord.

Day Five Pray: *Holy Spirit, give me a cleansed heart—a heart like Yours. Empower me to live with pure thoughts.*

11. What do the following verses say about how God treats our sins?

a) Psalm 103:12

b) Isaiah 43:25

...when God says He "remembers your sins no more", he is not saying that he cannot remember our sins. Rather, he is promising that He will not remember them. When he forgives us, he chooses not to mention, recount, or think about our sins ever again...Fortunately, when we decide to forgive someone and stop dwelling on an offense, painful memories usually begin to fade." --Ken Sande, The Peacemaker

12. Even after we forgive from our hearts, it can be difficult not to think about what someone did to us. Thoughts sometimes come out of nowhere! Rather than saying to ourselves, "Don't think about it," it can be helpful to have a weapon on hand to fight the intruding thought. Read the following scriptures and ask God to show you the tools He provides for standing against negative feelings. Name the weapons and then write a sentence on how you would use them in Day Four's situation.

a) Luke 6:27,28

b) Philippians 4:4-7

c) Philippians 4:8