

# SeekingHim

Experiencing the Joy  
of Personal Revival

*A 12-Week Study for Individual and Group Use*

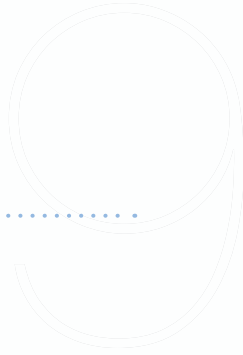
*"You who seek God, let your hearts revive."*

**PSALM 69:32b**

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Lesson



# Forgiveness:

## Setting Your Captives Free

**F**orgiveness. The gift everyone wants to receive but finds hard to give. It's not easy to forgive. Yet forgiveness is one of the most important elements of personal and corporate revival. "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity?" the Old Testament prophet asked (Micah 7:18). When we repent of our sins, God mercifully releases us from our debt, through the great cost of His Son's death on the cross. As recipients of His forgiveness, we are called to forgive those who sin against us. When we release our offenders through forgiveness, we discover the key that unlocks the prison doors of our own hearts and sets us free to experience greater peace and joy than we ever dreamed possible.



### MEMORY VERSE

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."  
**(Ephesians 4:32)**

### Going Deeper in the Word

Luke 17:1-4; 23:32-47  
Ephesians 4:29-5:2



## Day 4: Making It Personal

### + Tip

The "Making It Personal" section in this lesson is longer than usual. You may want to allow extra time or even take an additional day to complete this exercise.

Every child of God who wants to experience personal revival must be willing to deal honestly and fully with any unforgiveness that may be in his or her heart. Today's study is designed to help you face some of the barriers that could keep you from choosing the pathway of forgiveness.<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever found yourself making (or thinking) any of the following statements? As you work through this section, pay special attention to any of these perspectives that reflect the way you think or feel. Then consider how God may want to adjust your thinking as it relates to the issue of forgiveness.

### 1. "There's no unforgiveness in my heart."

It is possible to live with the seeds of unforgiveness for so long that we become blinded to its presence in our life. The following questions will help open your eyes to any unforgiveness that may have become lodged in your heart.

a. Have you ever been hurt? Put a check next to any of the following hurts you have experienced:

- lied to
- promise(s) broken
- neglected by grown children
- violent crime against self or a loved one
- treated unfairly by an employer
- parents divorced
- slandered/falsely accused
- divorced by mate
- mate committed adultery or other sexual sin
- rejected by parents
- stolen from
- cheated in a business/financial deal
- rebellious/wayward son or daughter
- belittled
- alcoholic parent or mate
- abandoned by parent or mate

- publicly humiliated
- abused (physically, emotionally, sexually)
- other \_\_\_\_\_

b. As you reflect on the ways you have been wronged, do you find any of these statements to be true?

- Every time I think of [person or offense], I still feel angry.
- I have a subtle, secret desire to see [person] pay for what he/she did to me.
- Deep in my heart, I wouldn't mind if something bad happened to [the person(s)] who hurt me.
- I sometimes find myself telling others how [person] hurt me.
- If [person's] name comes up, I am more likely to say something negative about him/her than something positive.
- I cannot thank God for [person].

These statements are an indication that we have not fully forgiven all those who have sinned against us.

God's Word says that if we say we have not sinned, even though His Spirit shows us otherwise, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8). Have you deceived yourself into believing that you have forgiven everyone who has sinned against you? As God examines your heart, does He find any unforgiveness there?

c. Put a check in this box if you would agree with God that there is unforgiveness in your heart.

**2. "There's no way I could ever forgive [person] for [offense]. He (she) hurt me too deeply."**

a. What are some of the hurts Jesus suffered from us?

*Isaiah 53:3-7* \_\_\_\_\_

*Psalms 22:6-7, 16* \_\_\_\_\_

### Key Point !

Forgiveness means that I fully release the offender from his debt. It means fully cleaning his record. It is a promise never to bring up the offense against him again (to God, to others, or to the offender himself).

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you. This is hard; ... how can we do it? Only, I think, by remembering where we stand, by meaning our words when we say in our prayers each night, ‘Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.’ We are offered forgiveness on no other terms. To refuse it means to refuse God’s mercy for ourselves.”

—C. S. Lewis

b. How has God dealt with us who have sinned against Him so greatly?

*Ephesians 2:4-5* \_\_\_\_\_

*Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 10:17* \_\_\_\_\_

*Micah 7:18-19* \_\_\_\_\_

c. How does the New Testament command us to respond to those who wrong us?

*Luke 6:27* \_\_\_\_\_

*Luke 17:3-4* \_\_\_\_\_

*Romans 12:17-21* \_\_\_\_\_

d. According to Colossians 3:13, what should be the measure—the standard—of our forgiveness?

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e. On that basis, what offense is “too great” to forgive?

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f. Would God command us to do something that He would not enable us to do?

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g. How are we enabled to forgive (see Philippians 2:13)?

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**3. "They don't deserve to be forgiven."**

a. What did we do to earn or deserve God's forgiveness?

*Romans 5:8* \_\_\_\_\_

*Ephesians 2:4-9* \_\_\_\_\_

b. What are the reasons we should extend forgiveness to those who sin against us?

- The offender is genuinely sorry for what he has done.
- We have been forgiven an infinite debt by God, so we forgive as we have been forgiven.
- God commands us to forgive.
- The offender promises never to do it again.
- The offense was an "understandable mistake."

**4. "If I forgive them, they're off the hook!"**

We may feel that if we forgive another, justice will not be served—they'll get off scot-free. The problem is, we have put *ourselves* in the position of a "bill collector."

What does Romans 12:19 have to say about "bill collecting"?

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Letting the offender off *your* hook does not mean they are off God's hook. Forgiveness involves transferring the prisoner over to the One who is able and responsible for meting out justice. It relieves us of the burden and responsibility to hold them in prison ourselves.

"Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it."

—Mark Twain

Here's something to think about: Would I be willing for God to deal with me in the same way that I want to see my offender dealt with?

**5. "I've forgiven them, but I'll never be able to forget what they did to me."**

- a. According to these Scriptures, when God forgives us, what does He promise to do?

*Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 10:17* \_\_\_\_\_

*Psalms 103:12* \_\_\_\_\_

**! Key Point**

Forgiveness is not forgetting. It is a transaction in which I release my debtor from the obligation to repay his debt.

An omniscient God cannot *forget*. But He does promise not to "remember our sins" or hold them against us. God does not ask us to *forget* the wrong that has been done to us, but simply to *forgive*. However, the attitude of our heart, when we think of the offense, can be an indicator of whether or not we have truly forgiven.

- b. When you think of the person who has hurt you most deeply, which of the following attitudes do you experience?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> emotional churning              | <input type="radio"/> sense of rest and relinquishment  |
| <input type="radio"/> desire for revenge              | <input type="radio"/> desire to see him spiritually restored  |
| <input type="radio"/> hard to ask God to bless him    | <input type="radio"/> desire for God to bless him   |
| <input type="radio"/> hard to see his good qualities  | <input type="radio"/> gratefulness to God for this person   |
| <input type="radio"/> want others to know what he did | <input type="radio"/> humbled by how greatly you have sinned against God and how much He has forgiven you |

**6. "I believe I have forgiven, but I still struggle with feelings of hurt."**

- a. According to the following passages, what must we be willing to do in addition to forgiving those who sin against us?

*Luke 6:27-31* \_\_\_\_\_

*Romans 12:17-21* \_\_\_\_\_

**+ Tip**

If you are uncertain about how to handle a particular section biblically, seek counsel from a godly third party. Some situations may require legal intervention or church discipline. In some cases, such as those involving sexual abuse or immorality, reconciliation on the horizontal level may not be appropriate.

The act of forgiveness is only the starting place for dealing with those who wrong us. The initial act of releasing the offender must be followed by a commitment to invest positively in his or her life. This investment is the key to experiencing emotional healing and wholeness. In situations where it is not possible or appropriate to rebuild the relationship with an individual, we can still invest in their lives through prayer.

b. What are some practical ways you could “return good for evil” or invest in the life of someone who has wronged you?

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. “I won’t forgive!”**

Ultimately, forgiveness comes down to a choice. It is a choice that God both commands and enables. But some simply refuse to make that choice.

a. According to the following Scriptures, what can we expect if we refuse to forgive those who sin against us?

*Matthew 6:14–15* \_\_\_\_\_

*Matthew 18:32–35* \_\_\_\_\_

*2 Corinthians 2:10–11* \_\_\_\_\_

b. What are some of the physical, emotional, and spiritual “tormentors” (Matthew 18:34 KJV) we might experience in our lives if we are unwilling to forgive?

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**Tip +**

Whenever possible, we should seek to rebuild the relationship between ourselves and the offender.

“Bitterness robs us of joy and peace. It hijacks us, taking us places we never wanted to go, doing things we never wanted to do, and making us people we never wanted to be.”

—Bill Elliff

c. From the list above in question b, circle those consequences of unforgiveness that you have personally experienced at one time or another.

Choosing the pathway of forgiveness can be extremely difficult. You may have been sinned against in ways that have caused enormous pain and consequences in your life. Just working through this lesson may be opening up some wounds or memories you'd just as soon not face. Be assured that if you are willing to walk into the pain, God will go there with you. Hard as it may be to forgive those who have sinned against you, you will experience great freedom as you choose to obey God, by His grace.



## Day 5: Making It Personal

Has God revealed any lack of forgiveness in your heart? Do you desire to be set free from the prison of unforgiveness? Are you ready to choose the pathway of forgiveness? If so, here are some steps that will help you deal with the hurts and offenses you have experienced.

### 1. Make a list of the people who have wronged you.

Next to each name, write the offense(s) that person has committed against you. Then record how you have responded to their wrongdoing. Be as honest and specific as possible—have you loved them, prayed for them, forgiven them? Or have you resented them, withheld love from them, slandered them to others, been bitter toward them?

Person	Their Offense	My Response
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**2. Thank God for each person who has wounded you,** for they are His instruments to sanctify you—to mold and conform you to the image of Jesus.

**3. Confess to God, and then to the offender, any wrong responses you may have had** (unforgiveness, hatred, bitterness, gossip). Be careful not to blame them for your wrong attitudes or responses. Remember that God does not hold us responsible for the wrongs others have done to us; He only holds us responsible for how we respond to what others do to us.

**4. As Christ has forgiven you, fully forgive each offender.** Remember that forgiveness is not a feeling; rather, it is a choice and an act of the will. It is a commitment to clear the other person's record and never to hold that offense against him again.

Keep in mind that emotional healing may involve a process, but actual forgiveness can be extended in a moment. Don't wait to forgive until you feel emotionally healed from the wound; instead, choose to forgive and let God begin the process of true healing in your life.

### Tip +

You may want to use a separate piece of paper for this exercise, or photocopy this page to record your answers more privately.

“To forgive is to set the prisoner free, and then discover the prisoner was you.”

—Author Unknown

“Forgiveness ought to be like a cancelled note— torn in two and burned up, so that it never can be shown against one.”

—A. W. Tozer

Verbalize to the Lord your forgiveness of each of the individuals listed under 1, above. “Father, as you have forgiven me, so I choose to forgive [person] for [name the offense].”

**5. Build bridges of love.** Ask God to show you how you can “return good for evil” (Luke 6:27-31; Romans 12:17-21). List some practical ways you can invest positively in the lives of those who have wronged you.

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**6. “Comfort him” and “reaffirm your love for him”**

(2 Corinthians 2:7-8). If the offender is repentant, assure him of God’s forgiveness and your love, so he will not be “overwhelmed by excessive sorrow” (v. 7) and so Satan will not be allowed to take “advantage” of you through any unforgiveness (v. 11, NKJV).

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<sup>1</sup> These statements and steps toward forgiveness in Days 4 and 5 of Lesson 9 have been adapted from “Freedom Through Forgiveness” by Nancy Leigh DeMoss, ©2001, published by Life Action Ministries.