



FORGIVING *what* *you* CAN'T FORGET

BIBLE STUDY COMPANION



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KNOW THE TRUTH. LIVE THE TRUTH. IT CHANGES EVERYTHING.

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LYSA TERKEURST



Hi OBS friends! My name is Wendy Blight, and I'm the Biblical Content Specialist for Online Bible Studies. Our Bible Study Companion teaching team is excited to partner with you over the next six weeks to draw closer to God and each other as we wrestle together through the topic of forgiveness.

Some of the messiest parts of our lives stem from refusing to extend forgiveness to one another. We wrestle with forgiving someone, whether it's one marked event or a lifetime collection of hurts. The human side of us tends to settle in on the hurt. The loss. The betrayal. The violation. The anger. The bitterness. We forget that forgiveness is an option and instead almost enjoy holding on to the offenses ... the anger, hurt and bitterness.

Through our six weeks together, we'll discover what the Bible says about forgiveness, identify the places where, and the reasons why, unforgiveness holds us captive and learn step-by-step biblical truths and processes to help us walk in the freedom of forgiveness.

We're excited to have you join us on this journey. So, as we begin our time together, ask God what He wants to teach you. Listen for His voice. Invite Him to be at work in your heart and to lead you down the steps He wants to take you. And most importantly, pray for the courage to take them.

And, remember, you don't travel alone. We are with you.

We truly believe this will be a divine appointment with God for you!

Holding you close to my heart,

Wendy

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Lesson 1

Bible Study Companion Leader: Wendy Blight



Hi! Welcome to Lesson 1 of our *Forgiving What You Can't Forget* Bible Study Companion (BSC). My name is Wendy Blight. I serve as the Biblical Content Specialist for our Online Bible Studies team. I'm excited to be with you this week as we introduce our topic for this study: forgiveness.

Sometimes, it's hard to know where to begin when we study forgiveness. Why? Because when our hearts are wounded and our feelings hurt, forgiveness is not what immediately comes to mind. Instead, what spills out is just the opposite — anger, harsh words or the desire to retaliate. Instead of laying down the offense that stands before us, we pick it up and carry it around with us. I don't know about you, but sometimes not forgiving feels better and more satisfying in the moment.

But according to God's Word, forgiveness is not an option. It's a command.

So, since we have to wrestle through this very hard topic of forgiveness, the best place to begin is with God's Word. Hebrews 4:12 tells us God's Word is living and active, powerful and penetrating. The scriptures are God-breathed words sent from God's heart to our hearts. For the purposes of our time together, they are Heaven-sent, anointed words of wisdom and guidance to equip us as we walk through the hard journey of learning forgiveness.

God makes clear in His Word, as I stated above, forgiveness is not an option. It's a command. As hard as those words are to read, it helps to remember *who* is commanding us to forgive.

The One asking us to forgive is the One who loves us so much He sent His only Son, Jesus, to take the wrath of our sin upon Himself. The One who watched His Son die an excruciating death on the cross so that we could be forgiven, redeemed and called children of God now and for all eternity. The One who is the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.

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So, as we open His Word together, as we wrestle to forgive those who have hurt, wounded, betrayed and even abused us, let's not forget the God who walks alongside us has forgiven us, deeply loves us and leads us with a compassionate heart.

Below, please prayerfully read the Bible verses and passages on forgiveness, sent from the heart of our Creator and our Abba Father. I encourage you to read each one aloud. Don't take notes yet. Circle, highlight or underline words and phrases that speak to your heart.

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31-32, NIV).

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13, NIV).

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12, NIV).

"When they hurled their insults at [Jesus], he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23, NIV).

"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing'" (Luke 23:34a, NIV).

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18, NIV).

"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times'" (Matthew 18:21-22, NIV).

"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (Hebrews 12:14-15, NIV).

"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins" (Mark 11:25, NIV).

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry," (James 1:19, NIV).

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I'm closing our time in the Word with one more passage from the book of Ephesians. One that doesn't necessarily address forgiveness, but it helps center us in our wrestling with forgiveness. It defines who our enemy really is. The one with whom we're truly battling.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should" (Ephesians 6:10-20, NIV).

Oh, friend, these words should encourage us in our battle. We're not fighting against our husband, our children, our family members, our co-workers, our friends, our neighbors, our church family nor our political rivals. We're not fighting against flesh-and-blood people.

We're fighting another enemy. And he's a real enemy — the devil. But he's an enemy who has already been defeated! Jesus has not only won this battle for us. This passage tells us God equips us with His armor and His power to fight this battle..

Our next step after studying God's Word on forgiveness is to prepare our hearts through prayer. Will you join me in praying this prayer as we begin our study together?

Abba Father, thank You for loving me, a most unlovable girl at times. Thank You for forgiving me of my sin and giving me new life in You. Thank You that in You I am a new creation. Fill my reservoir of love to overflowing with Your unconditional, sacrificial love.

As I enter into this study, tender and soften my heart to receive what it is You have for me. Humble my heart to obey what I hear, even if it sounds impossible.

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Through Your love living in me, enable me to respond in obedience to what You call me to do. Prepare my heart to let go of my hurt (bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, betrayal, resentment, hatred) because right now, letting go isn't what I want. Help me to surrender that hurt in ways that will bring You glory and work good in my life.

I know this will be hard, God, but I'm committing right now to make myself a willing vessel for You to work in. I 'm willing to try. But, I need Your help. Your strength. I need to trust You. Use my time in the Word each day and each week to gain a deeper understanding and trust in who You are and what You are asking me to do.

I love You, Lord and ask all this in Jesus' most powerful and healing name. Amen.

Friend, I know we aren't physically together, but I wrote this prayer with you in my heart. Though I don't know you by name, God does. He drew you to this very time and place to meet Him in His Word and in the pages of Lysa's book. I'm praying this prayer as I write it, and now I'm asking the Lord to join my heart with yours as you pray this prayer now. Together, knit by God's Spirit, we've prayed God's Word together. Through this prayer, He's preparing our hearts for the mighty healing, transforming work He will do over the next weeks.

Finally, as our last step for today's BSC, take time to read through each verse and passage listed above again.

Pay attention to the words and phrases the Lord directed you to. The ones you highlighted, circled and/or underlined. Then walk through these steps.

1. Sit with each one.
2. Take notes on what you feel. What you hear.

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5. If you're angry with God, write it below. Tell Him how you feel and why. I promise He can take it. And, really, He already knows it.

6. Write how you feel about what God is asking you to do with regard to forgiving this person or these people.

7. Write what holds you back and why. Do you fear what it will require of you? Do you feel they'll be getting off the hook and how that will affect you? Do you want to see them punished and forgiving will not give you that satisfaction?

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Finally, friend, do you see this person, or these people, as your enemy? If you do, invite God to help you see them through the eyes of our Ephesians 6 passage. Change the lens through which you look at them.

Okay, it's time to stop. We have a six-week journey ahead. Today is step one. Today is about preparing our hearts for what's to come. To lay our hurts before God. To be honest about how hard this feels and this is.

But, you don't journey alone. We are right here with you! Each one of your teachers (Katrina, Stacy, Nichole, Trish and me) are walking with you. Praying for you. Cheering you on. And, I can't wait to meet you on the other side!

Holding you close in my heart,

Wendy

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Lesson 2

Bible Study Companion Leader: Stacy J. Lowe



Hi there, friend, and welcome to Lesson 2 of our Bible Study Companion. So thankful to have you join us!

While I'm excited to begin this deep dive into the topic of forgiveness, I know it's a sensitive issue for many. Forgiveness can be hard, especially when the pain and betrayal of the offense cuts deep. Over the next several weeks, we'll focus on the forgiveness of others, but today, I want to take a different approach. Today I want to ask: Do you ever struggle to forgive *yourself*?

Surely I'm not alone in this — the only person to hold herself to an impossible standard of perfection, then berate herself when she inevitably falls short.

Or maybe it goes even deeper than that. What if that thing you're struggling to forgive yourself for is more than just a failure to achieve perfection? What if it's a flat-out, willful sin from your past or even your present? What then?

Wherever you may fall on that spectrum, God doesn't want you to stay there. I pray today's lesson will help you to move beyond the struggle for perfection and into an acceptance and forgiveness of one of God's most beautiful gifts to the world — YOU.

May I pray for you as we get started today?

Father God, I pray for the woman who is reading this now, for the one who may feel too far gone to grant herself forgiveness, for the one who knows she's forgiven by You, but struggles to let herself believe it. Give her wisdom, give her courage, give her peace, and give her clarity of mind that she may begin to see herself in the same way that You do. Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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The Struggle to Forgive

Why do you think forgiving ourselves is so hard?

Perhaps because...

It's like I'm saying what I've done is OK. I can't let myself off the hook.

After what I've done? I'm not worthy of being forgiven.

I should be better than this.

I need to pay for what I did.

Any of those sound familiar? What else would you add to that list?

Oh, my friend, I know these words well. I'm quite often my own worst critic, replaying over and over in my mind harsh words that escaped my lips, bad attitudes that leaked out onto others, and wrong choices I've made — a never-ending litany of my worst moments. It doesn't matter if I've apologized and made things right; these situations come to mind, and I feel guilty all over again.

This is not the life God wants for us, though.

Check out [Romans 8:1](#), then copy it in the space below.

Now read and copy [John 10:10](#).

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I invite you to tuck these nuggets of truth into your heart and hold on to them throughout today's lesson. In fact, take a moment to read the declaration below. Read it out loud. Declare God's beautiful promises from John 10:10 over your heart and mind.

Jesus came to give me life, and there is no condemnation for me because I belong to Him!

Amen!

Performance = Worth?

The author of Romans, Paul (or Saul, as he's sometimes known), had an impressive religious pedigree.

Read [Philippians 3:4-6](#). In this passage, Paul provides a list of his qualifications. What does Paul include on this list?

What do you notice about the things he mentions?

Here's what I see: a checklist to measure up against.

- Circumcised at 8 days old? ✓
- Pure-blooded citizen of Israel? ✓
- Pharisee? ✓
- Strictly obedient to Jewish law? ✓

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As he says in verse 4,

“... I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more” (NLT).

Paul was all about obeying the rules and had followed them since birth. In fact, in verse 6, he says,

“... I obeyed the law without fault” (NLT).

In Paul's eyes, performance equaled worth, and he had done well.

Paul isn't the only one we find in Scripture with this viewpoint.

Flip back to [Matthew 19:16-20](#).

What question does this man ask of Jesus?

Like Paul, this rich young man was trying to earn his worth and wanted to be sure he had done enough.

Can you relate to these tactics? I know I can. And while I doubt any of us keep a physical checklist on hand to compare ourselves against, I bet internally we all have one.

What are some things that would show up on your performance checklist?

Mine would include things like going to church each week, reading my Bible daily, being kind to everyone, avoiding gossip and remembering to pray. Perhaps your list is similar.

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How do you feel when you're doing well and following right along with everything on your list? Why do you feel this way?

When I'm doing well, I feel accomplished and satisfied. But then comes the day when I'm too tired to crawl out of bed early and Bible-reading goes out the window. Or I'm having a bad day and grouch at everyone I come in contact with. What then?

As your performance rating goes down, does your sense of worth seem to go along with it? Why do you think this happens?

I've come to realize that when I struggle to forgive myself, more often than not, what I'm really struggling against is performance-based religion.

It starts off innocently enough, where I desire to do what's right. But, if I'm not careful, I'll prop myself up on those things so much that when I *don't* do them, I'm crushed beneath the weight of my own failure. Even though I know I'm forgiven by God, I still can't help but feel the need to somehow earn my way.

Two Different Paths

While both Paul and this young man had similar expectations of earning their way to Heaven, their paths diverged when confronted with the Truth.

Going back to the passage in Matthew 19, the rich man answered Jesus' question in the affirmative. Yes, he had kept all the commandments mentioned. I imagine he was feeling pretty confident and self-assured at that point.

Read verses [21-22](#). What did Jesus then instruct him to do, and what was his response?

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The Message paraphrases verse 22 like this:

“This was the last thing the young man expected to hear. And so, crestfallen, he walked away. He was holding on tight to a lot of things, and he couldn’t bear to let go.”

You see, it wasn’t so much about the young man needing to give up his riches as it was him needing to give up his *heart* and his desire to do things his own way. *That’s* what Jesus wanted from him.

Y’all, this part challenges me. I’m (typically) a rule-follower, and I want to do what’s right, but this passage shows me that holding too tightly to my performance can actually get in the way of a proper relationship with God.

How did this man’s rule-keeping work against him?

How could your own rule-keeping do the same?

This rich man was so focused on keeping every rule, he had no time or desire for what really mattered: a relationship with his Creator. He thought he could earn his way to Heaven, and when Jesus showed him that even his best efforts would fall short, he chose to give up and walk away.

Ouch.

Now let’s go back to Paul. We’ve already read through his checklist of religious accomplishments in Phillippians. Now, we’re going to go back to the beginning of Acts, *before* he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and became a believer. At that time, Paul took great pride in his Jewish heritage. So much so that when fellow Jews turned away from their faith to follow Jesus, he *“harshly persecuted”* this new church body ([Philippians 3:6](#), NLT).

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Read [Acts 8:1-3](#). How did Paul (or Saul, as he's referred to here) persecute the church?

Understand that Paul was *proud* of doing these things. He was so caught up in following the rules that, like his predecessor we read about in Matthew, he had no time for a relationship.

But that all changed one chapter later in Acts 9, when he personally encountered Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus.

Read [Acts 9:1-9](#).

When the rich young man met Jesus, he turned away. What was different about Paul's response?

Jesus' words to him made Paul realize that instead of working for God, he'd actually been working *against* Him. Jesus then instructed Paul to go into the city where he would be told what to do. With the help of his friends, Paul obeyed.

Now read verses [10-16](#).

Because of Paul's infamous reputation as a persecutor of the Church, Ananias expressed deep concern about God's assignment to send him to lay hands on Paul and restore his sight. But check out verse 15. God made His purposes very clear to Ananias.

What words does God use to describe Paul and the call God had on his life?

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In the NLT, God refers to Paul as His “*chosen instrument*.”

Was God unaware of who Paul had been or the things he had done? No. He was fully aware, but those things no longer mattered. God had a call for Paul’s life and knew who Paul could and would become in Him.

Friend, the good news is you, too, are a chosen instrument of God. Before time began, God knew you would be His daughter. Chosen. Forgiven. Saved. Redeemed. Created with great purpose.

Read [Ephesians 2:10](#). How does this verse affirm what we’re learning here? How does this make you feel?

Now read verses [Acts 9:17-31](#).

What happened in verses 17 and 18?

After God restored Paul’s sight, summarize what happened in verses 18-31.

How did Paul’s past sin help spread the message of Jesus Christ?

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A Better Way

Paul didn't try to hide who he'd been. He didn't beat himself up or hang on to guilt and shame over the things he'd done wrong. Instead, he used it as a launching pad to show others a better way.

Flip back over to Philippians 3 again, and read verses [2-4](#).

What does Paul say we should *not* put our confidence in?

Instead, what should we rely on?

In verses [5-6](#), Paul shared his checklist we talked about earlier. The list that validated his performance and worth.

Now read verses [7-11](#).

Those things he took pride in — the many ways he relied on himself for salvation — here, Paul declared it all worthless in comparison to knowing the risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

Instead of relying on “doing” for salvation, how does Paul say we (and he) achieve righteousness?

Let's get a little more specific. Reread verse 9. From where did Paul initially receive his righteousness? After giving his life to Christ, where did Paul find his righteousness? What Paul came to learn was that it was never about him and what he could do. It was instead about who and whose he was. He was created in the image of God. And, he was a saved child of the One True God. Once he understood his true identity and found himself firmly in the grip of Jesus Christ, everything changed.

Did he ever look back with regret on the person he had been and the horrible things he had done? Maybe. But check out what he says in verses [12-14](#).

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What one thing did Paul choose to focus on?

Why was he able to do this? (Hint! Read what he says in [Romans 7:4-6](#).)

That law that he tried to keep so perfectly no longer had any power over him because he was in Christ Jesus. The same is true for us. Every single one of our failures and mistakes was nailed with Jesus to the cross.

I hope you grasp the incredible significance of this statement. It means when we belong to Jesus, when we walk confidently in our identity as a daughter of the One True God, we can give ourselves grace. We can let go of our performance checklist and the need for perfection. Friend, believing, living and walking in these truths bring great freedom!

Which Will You Choose?

Jesus invited the rich young man to set aside his laser-focus on following the law to follow *Him* instead, but the man decided the price was too high, and he walked away sad.

When Jesus issued the same invitation to Paul, *he* offered up *everything* and his life was never the same.

My friend, please hear me when I say this: Belonging to Jesus does *not* bring with it the expectation of perfection. If we were able to follow God's law perfectly on our own, there would've been no need for Jesus. That's not who we are, though. We are flawed humans living in a sin-soaked world.

Read [John 3:16-18](#). What does this passage tell us about the depth of God's love and what it means for us?

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Now read the good news found in [Psalm 103:12](#), then Paul's encouraging hope for the future in [Philippians 3:17-21](#).

Take a few minutes to sit with these words, invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you through these passages, and then write your thoughts below.

It won't always be this hard. I promise. One day, our struggle with sin will be over. Until that time, let's remember we are Jesus girls. We belong to Him, and He lives inside of us. Because of that, our sin is no more. Remember, it's been removed as far as the east is from the west. So, let's stop clinging to and beating ourselves up for those sins He's already nailed to the cross.

Instead, let's you and me, right here, right now together agree to walk in the grace and forgiveness Jesus has already given us!

And, if letting go seems too hard right now, take a few minutes to sit quietly with Jesus. Tell Him what you're struggling to let go of. Offer it to Him in prayer. Whatever is on your heart, use the space below to write a prayer, nailing those sins and failures to the cross of Jesus once and for all.

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Before we end today, let's check out one more verse, [Galatians 5:1](#), in the NIV. This is my life verse, y'all! I encourage you to read it in your favorite translation, then personalize it in the space below, substituting your name into the verse.

I'll go first:

It is for freedom that Christ set Stacy free. Stand firm, Stacy! Do not let yourself be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Now, it's your turn.

That yoke of perfect obedience to the law has been lifted off our shoulders by Jesus Christ. We can offer ourselves grace and forgiveness because He's already done it all for us!

Will you choose today to focus on religious rules or a risen Savior?

I choose Jesus.

Praying for you,
Stacy

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Lesson 3

Bible Study Companion Leader: Nichole Stern



Hey y'all! Welcome to Lesson 3 of our Bible Study Companion for *Forgiving what You Can't Forget*. In case we've not yet met, I'm Nichole Stern, and I'm so glad you're here with us. It's an honor to walk through this study with you, and I look forward to our time together.

I invite you to join me at a table similar to the one Lysa TerKeurst mentions in Chapter 2 of *Forgiving what You Can't Forget*. We're sipping our favorite beverages and sharing the yummiest snacks. We're dressed in our most comfy clothes, and we're chatting like old friends, just as it should be at this table called community.

Welcome to the table, friend.

We'll spend this week exploring what God's Word says about community and why community is an important element in the life of Jesus girls.

Let's begin by writing down what comes to mind when you read or hear the word "community":

I raised the same question to a few of my friends and here are some of the answers they gave:

Family
Home
Relationships
Trust
Comfort
Teamwork

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One friend said, “People who are not confined to walls or organizations who are loving each other well.”

Another friend said: “People doing life together in a way that honors one another, acknowledging that even though they may not be homogenous, they can care for and love each other authentically.”

What Does Community Look Like?

Read [Acts 2:45-47](#), [Acts 14:26-28](#), [Romans 15:5-7](#) and [Hebrews 10:23-25](#).

What instructions are given in these verses?

What examples of community stand out to you?

Do these scriptures give you a better understanding of the importance God places on doing life with others? Why or why not?

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On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the most), how much does community matter to you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Oftentimes, our positive or negative experiences influence the importance we place on things.

Take a minute to think about how your experience with community has affected the importance it holds in your life. Share some of those positive (or negative) experiences below.

Sisters, community can be messy and complicated at times, but it's where we find our people. Our tribe. Our squad.

Most importantly, it's where we can find Jesus working in and through His people for His name's sake.

Why is Community Important?

In 2011, my husband and I purchased a home in the country. To be more specific, we bought the last house on a mile long dirt road that sits on ten acres of land. Todd said it was a logistical anomaly because it was a half an hour from everything.

Y'all — the closest Target is almost 45 minutes away. Have mercy!

We were still heavily involved in our church, but due to the distance, I found it increasingly difficult to attend Bible study in person each week. Then one of my dearest friends moved away, my job became more demanding, and we discovered that life in the country requires hours and hours of effort just to keep everyone and everything alive.

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At the same time, I was walking through one of the most difficult seasons of our 11+ year battle with infertility. I watched my friends have and raise their babies while year after year, my womb remained barren. I longed for a safe place to grieve my broken dreams, but I found myself increasingly isolated and alone.

God can certainly use our times of isolation to grow our faith and prepare us for what's ahead, but being perpetually isolated from people who love Christ and point us to Him can also make us more susceptible to the enemy's schemes. And that's where I found myself during those years.

Seasons of isolation are inevitable, but giving into the enemy's lies is not. Jesus' response to isolation and temptation provides just the instruction we need to defeat the devil's lies and schemes.

Read [Matthew 4:1-11](#).

Where was Jesus, and how was he feeling?

What transpired between Jesus and the devil?

How many times did the devil tempt Jesus?

How does Jesus respond to each temptation?

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1.

2.

3.

Christ responded to each temptation with the Word of God, and our response should be the same.

Take a moment to pray over any situations in your life that need to be filtered through God's Truth. After you pray, write your prayers or thoughts below.

But, to respond with the Truth, we must know the Truth.

Use your Bible to find the scriptures listed below. For those that speak to your heart in your specific season of life, I encourage you to write them in your journal or on index cards.

Writing God's Word helps us focus on *what's* being said, and then immersing ourselves in what we've written grows our faith.

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“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12, ESV).

[Psalms 119:11](#)

[John 14:15](#)

[Ephesians 6:10-11](#)

[Philippians 1:6](#)

[Philippians 3:8](#)

[Philippians 4:13](#)

[James 4:7](#)

[Hebrews 4:16](#)

[1 Peter 5:6-11](#)

[1 John 4:4](#)

I spent time in London last year and rediscovered my love for hot tea. While on the go, I used tea bags to make my favorite cinnamon or chai tea. I learned there are two methods for making tea with bags.

There is the dunking method, where the tea bag is dunked in and out of the hot water several times. Then there's the steeping method, where the tea bag is left in the hot water to permeate the water with its wonderful flavor and color.

Using this example of tea bags, how would you define your time in God's Word? Are you a dunker who grabs a quick word here and there? Or are you a steeper who let's God's Word permeate every crevice of your heart?

Friends, resisting Satan's temptations and combating His lies requires steeping ourselves in God's Word.

What are some things you can do to better steep yourself in Truth? (Some examples: set aside daily time with Jesus, listen to Scripture, worship music, read your Bible more ...)

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LISA TERKEURST

Lisa Terkeurst writes in Chapter 5 of *Forgiving what You Can't Forget*:

"God expressed before the woman was created that it wasn't good for the man to be alone. I always assumed that was because something was missing with Adam. But rereading it carefully helped me see created Adam was not incomplete. After all, when God made the man fall asleep, he didn't redo, remake, add to, or renovate the man at all. He actually took from him. But though it cost Adam some bone, God gave back something so much better than what was taken. Any sacrifice placed in the hand of God, God can bring good from" (page 81).

We weren't meant to do life alone; God created us for togetherness from the beginning.

Relationships are costly, but God can use them to give back so much more than what we give up.

If you're feeling alone this week as we study community, may I encourage you to pray and ask God to bring people into your life to love you and point you to Him? Don't be surprised if His answer is different from what you expect. When I prayed this prayer during my season of isolation I mentioned earlier, God brought me to an *online* community. The very one you're part of here ... Proverbs 31 Online Bible Studies. It wasn't what I expected, but it was exactly what I needed, and this beautiful community continues to bless my life today, almost seven years later!

How Can We Create Community?

Today we're going to read one of my favorite Bible stories in [Mark 2:1-5](#) that shows community in action. Take a few minutes to read it, and then we'll jump into our discussion.

In this story, we find Jesus preaching to a packed house in Capernaum. It was so full, you couldn't fit another body in that space, let alone four people carrying their paralyzed friend on a mat. I can only imagine these friends trying to figure out how to get their friend inside. They'd heard stories of Jesus' miracles and believed an encounter with Him would be life-changing for their paralyzed friend.

There's so much beauty in this text, and I just love the faith-in-action shown by these four friends.

Y'all — they literally ripped the roof off the house to get their friend to the feet of Jesus!

I want to do life with friends like this — how about you?

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LYSA TERKEURST

Even more so, I want to **BE** a friend like this. I want my belief in Jesus to be so strong that I'm willing to do *anything* to get my friends to Him, even if it means ripping the roof off my comfort zone.

How can we be friends that constantly point others to Jesus?

1. Love one another as Christ loves us. ([John 15:12](#))
2. Live out [Philippians 2:3-4](#), doing nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than ourselves. We look out for not just our own interests, but the interests of others.
3. Bear one another's burdens. ([Galatians 6:2](#))

In your Bible, look up the following verses for more ways we can create a community committed to pointing to Christ.

[Hebrews 10:24](#)

[1 Thessalonians 5:11](#)

[Proverbs 27:17](#)

[James 5:16](#)

[Romans 12:15](#)

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LYSA TERKEURST

How Do We Live Love Out in Community Practically?

As we close our time today, let's remember, we can't live a life of love if we don't have love pulsing within our hearts personally. God's amazing, unconditional, eternal love must first live and breathe in us before we can share it with others.

Then, once we know God's love inwardly, we're ready to live it outwardly. In small ways and big ways. Like being kind to those we don't want to be kind to. Refraining from gossip and words that tear others down. Forgiving wrongs done to us. Serving when we don't feel like it. Sharing an encouraging word when we don't really have it in us. Loving the unlovable who we think don't "deserve" it.

Living this way outwardly draws people to Jesus. They want more of what they see in us.

The truth is most people will never pick up a Bible. The way they meet Jesus ... what draws them into community ... is seeing and experiencing God's love in and through His people. That's us! God *in us* attracts others because godliness is attractive. It's inviting. The more we live a life of love, the more people will be drawn to us, to community and to the God we know and love.

Jesus says this very thing in John 13:34-35:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (NIV).

This love is a distinguishing MARK of believers.

It's only out of Christ's love living in us that you and I can love one another the way Jesus calls us to in John 13. When we love others the way Jesus loves us, THAT is when we become shining lights for Jesus in this world.

Take a few minutes to pray and ask God to show you one or two ways you can shine His love this week. Here are a few ideas. Send a text or email filled with words of encouragement, a prayer or Bible verses. Take a few minutes to chat with a person who serves you while you're out running errands and call them by name. Ask someone how you can pray for them and follow up. Ask forgiveness or extend forgiveness where you know there's been hurt or a misunderstanding.

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Write what you hear below. Commit to live out what God laid on your heart. Come back and write what God did in your heart and in your interaction as you lived out His call to love.

Thank you for joining me for Lesson 3. I've enjoyed our time together. I'm praying Romans 15:5-7 over us as we wrap up this week.

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (ESV) .

And may the love of Christ fill us to overflowing, so that it pours out to each and every soul we encounter.

Because of Jesus,
Nichole

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*This BSC addresses a sensitive topic. If you've been affected by sexual assault, whether it happened to you or someone you care about, **you're not alone**. Research tells us that sexual abuse and violence may affect as many as 1 in 3 women, and 1 in 6 men. That's why Wendy wrote Hidden Joy in a Dark Corner, a book about her triumph overcoming sexual assault through the power of God's Word. You can also find support from online.rainn.org or call the National Sexual Assault Hotline, 800.656.HOPE (4673) to speak with someone who can help.*

Lesson 4

Bible Study Companion Leader: Wendy Blight



Hi friend! I'm excited to join you again this week as we continue our journey on learning forgiveness. We're now over half way through our study!

As we begin our lesson today, please take a few minutes to revisit the questions you answered in our Lesson 1 BSC. That's the week I set forth a list of questions to prepare our hearts for the work we've been doing these past few weeks. Keep those questions, and your answers, tucked in your heart as we move through this lesson.

As we begin, please know I've prayed and asked the Lord to be at work in our hearts as we open His Word together. I'm asking God to reveal with clarity, and maybe even with words of confirmation, what He wants to teach us and what further steps He may want us to take on our forgiveness journey.

The story I'm opening with today is a forgiveness story I never thought would be mine to tell. It's hard to share, yet it's the best way to lead into today's teaching. Though the facts of my story may differ from yours, the truths from God's Word — the lessons the Lord taught me and continues to teach me — on this topic apply to any and all of our stories.

It was a few days after my college graduation. My college sweetheart, Monty, had just asked me to marry him, and I was about to start a job with my alma mater. Life was truly good.

But that all changed the afternoon I walked into my apartment to find an armed masked man waiting for me at the top of the stairs. The horrific acts he committed against me that afternoon changed the trajectory of my life forever.

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Though the police found my attacker's mask, gloves and knife within hours of my attack, they found no fingerprints.

I had a gut feeling it could have been a graduate student who lived in my apartment complex because not long after my attack, I noticed a man whose height, weight, and gait felt so familiar. But, it was when he turned toward me and I saw his steel blue eyes that chills ran up my spine. Shaking overtook my body, and I ran to my apartment and called the police.

Later that day they brought him in for questioning but found nothing weighty enough to hold him. It was my word against his.

Days later, I learned the police had questioned him for peeping in windows and exposing himself to several university coeds. Despite this new information, the police still refused to arrest him, reasoning Peeping Toms rarely progress to being rapists. Their response enraged me. I decided that if they wouldn't continue to investigate, I would. I became obsessed with punishing this man. I believed he was my attacker, and I wanted him to pay.

Since we were unable to proceed with a criminal prosecution, I pursued a different route, joining the group of women who had been victimized by him. We scheduled a hearing and testified before the University panel, alleging he was a danger to all young women on our campus. The University concluded he was a danger and expelled him. I had hoped that would be enough, but it wasn't.

I could not forget. I wanted my own revenge. I wanted to confront him in a court of law and see him declared guilty and sent to prison to pay for all he'd stolen from me.

For the weeks and months following my attack, I lived in a dark, lonely, terror-filled prison. One of the few bright lights in my dark place was my grandmother, who regularly called to check on me. She loved Jesus, and she loved me. I was her only grandchild. I look back now and know she was my heaven-sent prayer covering during this time.

But, her calls were also hard because she counseled me to forgive my attacker. Her words stunned me. Of all people, she loved me. She knew what he did to me and what he had stolen from me. She cautioned that if I didn't forgive him, I would never heal. I would never be free from the fear, anger and bitterness that imprisoned me..

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LYSA TERKEURST

But, how could she ask this of me? He was the evil, wicked sinner who destroyed my life and stole all that made me feel whole, valued, normal and safe.

Plus, how can anyone forgive someone they can't see face to face? Someone they can't have a conversation with? I was so confused.

She never gave up on me.

The very first place my grandmother directed me to were the words and life of Jesus.

Jesus Lived and Modeled Forgiveness

She first took me to the four gospels, focusing on the tremendous humiliation and suffering Jesus endured at the hands of His enemies. Suffering 39 lashes. Being stripped naked. The crushing of the crown of thorns into His head. The mocking. The spitting. The beating. And if that wasn't enough, the soldiers then ordered Him to carry His own cross to His certain death. Then, upon reaching Calvary, they laid Jesus onto two beams, stretched out His arms and drove spikes into His hand and feet, watching as His blood poured out onto the ground underneath Him.

It was a story I knew. One I'd heard every Easter. But this time, I heard it with fresh ears. It wasn't just a story. I realized for the first time that Jesus did this for *me*. A deep sense of sadness overwhelmed me. But, this time, right alongside that sadness arose a deep sense of gratitude. Gratitude that the One who "never sinned" suffered that horrific physical and emotional torment for *me*. For Wendy. It was truly beyond my human comprehension.

Have you ever experienced Jesus' crucifixion and death in a deeply personal way? If you have, write what you felt below. If not, what are you feeling now as you hear this story again through my story?

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Not only that. My mind sat with the fact that Jesus' slow, painful death had been on God's calendar from the beginning of time. Jesus' unjust, inhumane, incomprehensible suffering was part of God's plan.

Isaiah the prophet prophesied this in Isaiah 53:10, "*Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer ...*" (NIV).

"[H]im" is Jesus.

God planned before time began to pour out His wrath for my sins, and yours, on His One and only Son!

And when Jesus' tortured body and crushed spirit could handle it no more, Jesus cried out, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" translated into English means, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Mark 15:34, NIV)

Friend, we could not ask for a more beautiful example of an act of submission. Jesus submitted to His Father's plan, knowing His obedience meant separation from His Father as our sins were laid upon Him. Knowing His submission meant persecution, torture and a slow, painful death. The will of the Son submitted to the will of His Father not only willingly but also joyfully.

How do we know joyfully? Hebrews 12:2 tells us.

"... For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (NIV).

Reread Hebrews 12:2 and write it below.

What do you think the words "*for the joy set before him*" mean?

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I don't think Jesus rejoiced over His physical pain and suffering. Jesus rejoiced over what the pain and suffering would bring for God's people. They would bring forgiveness, freedom, salvation, and new life.

Jesus' story gets so much better!

Let's read Jesus' next words from the cross found in Luke 23:34.

"... Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (NIV).

Friend, these are more than words. This is Jesus' prayer from the cross to His Abba Father.

"Father, forgive them."

Jesus asked His Father to forgive the very men who hated Him. Persecuted Him. Physically abused Him. Tortured Him. Mocked Him.

Forgive the ones who eventually crucified Him.

Jesus' prayer convicted me because the question it laid before me was this: If Jesus asked His Father to forgive the men who nailed Him to the cross, what right do I have to withhold forgiveness from anyone, including the man who raped me?

In that moment, I received the head knowledge of what Jesus did for me and of the words of forgiveness He spoke to the men who tortured and crucified Him. But, sadly, my head knowledge didn't translate into action for quite a long time.

I debated forgiveness with God for years because, first, I wasn't Jesus.

Second, I wasn't as strong as Jesus. Not perfect like He is.

I reasoned my attacker's acts were cruel and vile. It's not like he spread lies about me. Stole my jewelry. Hurt my feelings. He raped me. He stole everything I held dear and all that made me feel secure. My value, my worth, my security. My dreams.

Oh, I'll confess I spoke words of forgiveness. I even thought I had forgiven him, but eventually memories and circumstances resurrected the anger and bitterness.

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LYSA TERKEURST

At one point on this journey, I attended an event and heard a beautiful story from one of my favorite Bible teachers, Anne Graham Lotz. Her story went to the very heart of my struggle. My belief that some sins are greater than others. The smaller ones are easier to forgive. And, we should forgive those.

But mine was BIG. Mine was criminal. Mine required justice, and justice had not been done.

Anne shared about her visit with a woman on death row who thought her sins were too bad and too big for God to forgive. Anne asked the woman if she'd ever been to the ocean and seen the little holes made by the crabs who darted in and out of them. The women nodded yes. She then asked her if she'd seen the medium-sized holes dug by little children to make sand castles. She nodded yes again. Anne then asked her if she could imagine huge holes created by machines dredging for a channel or ditch. The woman shook her head, baffled by her strange set of questions.

Anne then asked her what happens to all the holes, no matter their size, when the tide rolls in. She told us a smile lit up the woman's face. Anne confirmed what the woman's smile revealed: The water covers all the holes equally.

Anne compared the tide rolling in to the blood of Jesus pouring out. His blood washes over our sin and covers it ALL. God forgives all of our sins through the saving blood of Jesus!

Read [Psalm 103:12](#), [Jeremiah 31:34](#), [Isaiah 1:18](#), [Isaiah 43:25](#), [Hebrews 8:12](#), and [Hebrews 10:17](#). How do these verses add to/reinforce our discussion?

Friends, THIS is grace. It's the absolute beauty of God's grace.

Grace gives what we do not deserve.

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LISA TERKEURST

I KNEW in that moment what I had to do. But, each time I sat down to do it, the words wouldn't come. I felt sick at the very thought of forgiving my attacker. Questions flooded my mind that I didn't like the answers to.

If I forgive him, it means he gets away with what he did to me.

I want him to suffer for the years he has made me suffer.

I want him punished to pay for what he did to me.

He deserves no grace because he destroyed everything good in my life.

He's stolen years from my life to satisfy his sick needs.

And, if I'm completely honest, I felt good. I felt right. I felt justified in hating this man and wanting the worst for him.

Friend, as you're walking with me through my journey of forgiveness, can you identify with my emotions and questions? What are your emotions and questions? Write them below. Be honest. I promise it helps to write it down on paper. To put words to what you're thinking and feeling.

My heart just wouldn't follow what I knew in my head I should do.

I continued to wrestle with God. On one of my darkest days, God took me to the last two verses of Psalm 139, "*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*" (Psalm 139:23-24, NIV).

In this passage, David asked God to examine his heart and show him where he was not walking in step with God.

Friend, I knew harboring this unforgiveness in my heart was not walking in step with God. I'm thinking you may be feeling it too.

In fact, I knew the unforgiveness I harbored in my heart was walking outside God's best for me and in direct disobedience to His command to forgive.

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LISA TERKEURST

I needed MORE. This was just too hard. I knew what to do in my head, but my heart would not follow. My grandmother's words. Jesus' words led me to dig deeper into my Bible.

Jesus Taught Forgiveness

One of Jesus' greatest teachings on forgiveness comes in Matthew 18. It contains Jesus' famous words when asked by Peter how many times we must forgive someone who sins against us. Jesus answered Peter, "... *I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times*" (Matthew 18:22, NIV).

Read [Matthew 18:21-35](#).

I understood the analogy Peter was making in this parable. The king represented God, and we are the debtors.

Applying Jesus' words to my story, I knew Jesus forgave my million-dollar debt. My right for revenge. My right to exact punishment for my attacker.

And, I knew my grandmother was right; if I didn't forgive this debt I felt this man owed me, I would live the rest of my life in this prison of my own making.

Jesus ends the parable with powerful words.

Matthew 18:35, "*This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart*" (NIV).

Reread verse 35 and write it below. What do these words mean to you as you sit in your place of unforgiveness?

Friend, do you hear what I hear? God's Word could not be more clear. Forgiveness is a command.

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LYSA TERKEURST

I had no way out here. And, we have no way out. God commands forgiveness. The question is will we cooperate and work together *with* God in this process of forgiveness?

I felt the Holy Spirit working in my heart, driving me deeper into God's Word. I had a Study Bible. My Study Bible identifies scriptures in the margin and notes at the bottom of each page that speak to the same topic addressed in the verse or passage I'm studying. So, I looked up those passages.

Wow! Did God drive this truth about unforgiveness home. Giving me no way out ... again.

One of these passages was the Lord's Prayer. Read the Lord's Prayer found in [Matthew 6:9-15](#) in the NIV. Reread verse 12 and write it below.

Did you notice something unique about verse 12. When Jesus spoke of forgiving those who have sinned against us, he used the past tense, "*as we also have forgiven our debtors*" (Matthew 6:12, NIV). It's almost like Jesus is telling His disciples, and us, we should have a heart predisposed to forgive. In other words, if we enter into each day with a heart predisposed to forgive what has not yet been done to us, when someone does hurt us (lie to us, betray us, defy us, offend us, violate us), we receive it with a heart already aligned with God's regarding forgiveness. We must forgive.

We may not be able to do it at that moment. In fact, we most likely won't. It might take time. But, the key is we *agree* with God in advance that it's what we have to do. So, we won't spend months and years fighting God on this issue of forgiveness. Instead, we'll invite Him in immediately to align our hearts with His will. To walk in His will. To receive the healing and freedom that will come with forgiveness.

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LYSA TERKEURST

Here are a few verses we studied together in Lesson 1: [Mark 11:25](#), [Ephesians 4:32](#) and [Colossians 3:13](#). I invite you to reread them and write them below. Has your heart changed with regard to these verses now that we're halfway through our study? If so, share how. If not, what are you still wrestling with? Write your answers below.

Let's focus on Mark 11:25 for a moment,

"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins" (NIV).

Notice Mark's words: "If you hold ANYTHING against ANYONE" (emphasis added). His words are clear. God calls us to forgive every offense, no matter how big or small, because harboring unforgiveness interrupts our fellowship with God and prevents us from experiencing the fullness of fellowship with our Abba Father.

God cannot work in a heart shackled by unforgiveness. His fruit cannot flourish in a heart bound up in unforgiveness.

In fact, as Lysa points out, people who lay down offenses against us are really people who have unaddressed, unattended to hurt in their hearts, layer upon layer upon layer of hurt, and so they take their hurt out on everyone around them.

How are you progressing on your journey of unforgiveness with the name or names that have been on your heart?

Be encouraged. I have a name. I'm on another journey.

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LYSA TERKEURST

Forgiveness is HARD. Holding a grudge. Withholding love. The silent treatment. The sarcastic, hurtful comments sometimes feel so much better than humbling ourselves and extending forgiveness. Honestly, it's what comes naturally.

But, don't miss this. Unforgiveness and the fruit of God's Spirit cannot coexist in one heart. One will always reign over the other. The fruit of God's Spirit ... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self control ... cannot coexist with the poison that consumes our hearts when we harbor bitterness and unforgiveness.

Words of forgiveness are the only way to true healing and wholeness in us! I use the words "in us" because that is why we forgive. It's truly more for us than for the other person. God wants us to forgive to restore our relationship with Him.

Oh, friend. I heard God loud and clear. I wanted what God was offering me. I knew it would bring me the healing and freedom I so desperately wanted and needed. I finally understood that forgiveness is NOT about our feelings. If it was, we would never do it because it's not what comes naturally.

I had a deliberate choice to make. And, to make it, I needed to humble my heart and release what I wanted, which was revenge and justice as I defined it.

God wants much more than the words, though the first step we take may be the words. I'd been saying the words for years. I spoke the words. Meant them in the moment, but it didn't take long before the deep root of bitterness reared its ugly head and sucked me back down into the pit of unforgiveness.

These are the tragic consequences of living with a heart burdened by unforgiveness. It gives the devil a foothold in our hearts and our relationships. The devil feeds off of strife and division. He uses it to draw us further and further from the heart of God's Word and His healing.

Satan plants a root of bitterness in our hearts of which the author of Hebrew 12:15 warns:

"See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (NIV).

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET

BY LYSA TERKEURST

Read and reread these two statements.

Unforgiveness erects walls. Severs relationships. Creates division and strife.

Forgiveness tears down walls. Mends relationships. Builds unity and peace.

We have a choice.

The faith-filled choice: identifies the place of unforgiveness, goes to God, gives Him the hurt and asks for His help.

The faithless choice: resists God, holds on to the hurt, and deals with that hurt outside God's perfect plan.

The faithless choice allows bitterness to fester and take root. That root then takes hold of our heart, entangling and strangling it, leading to greater trouble not only for us but for all those around us. It's only antidote is God's love and God's Word.

We never shine God's love more than when we forgive those who have hurt us. Forgiveness brings glory and honor and praise to our Father in heaven.

I felt like I was finally ready because I realized the true essence of forgiveness. It wasn't about my attacker and me. It was about my relationship with my heavenly Father. Period.

And words from Beth Moore gave me what I needed to take my final step of forgiveness. She showed me God was not asking me to forget my hurt and pain. They were valid in God's eyes. They were real. But, I had to step out of that place where they ruled and reigned over my heart. Because as long as they did, God could not.

In *Breaking Free* by Beth Moore, she defines forgiveness as "handing over to God the responsibility for justice." What was it about her words that broke through the barrier of hatred and bitterness around my heart? I think it was knowing she forgave the person who sexually molested her as a child. I needed HER story. It carried the credibility I needed to take me to the other side of forgiveness. She understood my pain. Her heart hurt like mine. Her violation, deep like mine.

She was honest. The memories remain. They're still painful. But the key is the spirit of unforgiveness no longer has power over the one who forgives.

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LYSA TERKEURST

Friend, forgiveness SETS US FREE!

Sadly, before this time, I lived by the rule that you forgive when you receive an apology because then you've justified extending forgiveness. In my situation, an apology was impossible. It would never come. I would never receive a face-to-face apology with the person I had to forgive.

When we defer justice to God, an apology becomes moot. It's no longer an issue. We forgive free of any contingencies. We forgive trusting God will avenge what's been done or said to us in His time and in His way.

So, you would think the words would have poured forth from my mouth, right? I still struggled to say them because I held out hope that my attacker would commit another crime, be caught and then tied to my crime.

But God. He was not going to give up on His daughter. God orchestrated circumstances that forced me to choose Him over revenge and unforgiveness because God knew what He was about to do, though devastating, was necessary to reach the very depths of my unforgiving heart.

While I was in law school and living in Dallas, Texas, I learned the police had lost the physical evidence in my case. That evidence was the last hope I had of ever finding my rapist. God had closed the last door.

Devastation hit me hard. *God, what are You doing? Do You not want this person punished? Do you even know what You're doing with my life? Do you have a plan?*

Have you been there? I know you have. Share your thoughts below.

Oh, friend. Please hear my next words. No matter the circumstances surrounding your unforgiveness issue, today's teaching applies.

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LISA TERKEURST

God may feel so far away. Like he's absent. Forgotten you. That's how I felt for so long.

But I hope this lesson shows you that God was speaking all along. Through the words of my sweet grandmother, my Bible and heaven-sent Bible teachers. I heard them all. I thought I was listening. And I was, but I wasn't really hearing. Taking what I was reading into my heart and mind.

His Word never left me. It remained, tucked deep within me, because God tells us in Isaiah 55:11 that when His Word goes out, it will not return void. It will accomplish what He desires and achieve the purposes for which He sent it.

How thankful I am for that truth.

It wasn't until God took away every earthly hope of my getting revenge, until He took away every hope I had outside of Him alone to prosecute my attacker that I fully surrendered and obeyed.

Read [Romans 12:19](#). What does it say?

Over a decade after my grandmother's warning that if I refused to forgive, I would never receive God's full and complete healing, I listened. Really listened. I will never forget that day.

I sat alone on the sofa in my living room, speaking to a man who was not there. I could not see, feel or touch him, yet I forgave him. I had no idea the depth of seething hatred and bitterness that had poisoned my heart until I spoke those words, "I forgive you."

But, it went beyond those words. I forgave him for every act he committed against me. One by one. For every evil, sick word he spoke to me. One by one. Cleansing tears flowed down my cheeks as my chest heaved up and down, up and down till it felt as if I couldn't breathe.

In that moment, a precious peace fell upon me. A peace that passed all understanding. A peace that has guarded my heart from that unforgiveness ever rising up again in my heart.

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LYSA TERKEURST

Oh, friend, yes I still struggle with unforgiveness with other people. But I now have the tools to process it.

So, let's return to that name on your heart. The one you need to forgive. Will you enter into that process of forgiveness with me? Even if the only step you can take right now is to write down a name. That's enough! That's obedience. That's a good start.

Here's the process:

1. Write the name of the person or persons you need to forgive.
2. Take one step toward extending forgiveness. This will look different for each one of us.

Maybe your hurt is so deep and fresh that the only step you can take is to pray for God to soften your heart toward that person.

Maybe you can't physically be with that person, but you can write a note or make a phone call.

Maybe the person is no longer with us. You can write each hurtful word or act they committed like Lysa suggested in the book. Or you can do what I did and speak every action or word which you are forgiving and take each one before the Lord over time, forgiving each one.

If the person is close by, you can schedule a visit.

3. Pray this prayer with me.

Father, thank You for loving me so much that You sent Your One and only Son to die for my sins. To redeem me and give me a new heart and a new name, Daughter of the One True God. Jesus, thank You for loving me so much that You willingly and joyfully gave Your life for me.

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Help me to fully surrender my hurt [bitterness, anger, unforgiveness, betrayal, resentment] to You and trust You to exact justice. Bind up and heal my heart so that I can be a vessel of Your love.

Through that love, enable me to love (insert name of person you need to forgive). Love with Your love. A love that doesn't remember wrongs. A love that forgives no matter the personal cost because of the greater blessings that come with forgiveness.

Now that I'm able to live free from the prison of unforgiveness, empower me and give me a desire to pray for (name). And as I pray for (name), open his/her heart so he/she can know and experience You and Your love in his/her life. Bring healing and wholeness to (name). I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

This is God's will for us, sweet friend, so take it one step at a time. God will give you what you need each step of the process. He will be faithful because He is a faithful God.

Praying with you,

Wendy

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Lesson 5

Bible Study Companion Leader: Katrina V. Wylie



Hello, Bible study friend! I'm glad you're here. Spending time going deeper with God in His Word is worthy work, especially when it comes to working through forgiveness.

We started this fifth week with these words from Lysa TerKeurst in *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*:

"Getting hurt by people is hard. Getting hurt by what God allows can feel unbearable" (p. 156).

Unbearable. Have you ever felt unable to endure or tolerate something God's allowed in your life?

Laying in the hospital bed, eyes clamped shut, I desperately cling to the rhythm of my breathing. In... "I will not panic!" Out... "I will not panic!" A door opens. Footsteps click across the floor. Hushed voices seep into my semi-consciousness — a nurse talking to my husband, "She's coping well. Look, she's breathing through her contractions. She's fine." Anger rises within me. "I am not fine!" But my response only reverberates through the recesses of my mind. My words are trapped, I'm trapped, with pain and exhaustion as my only companions. Panic presses in at the realization that, though it's already been two days, they're still not going to step in. No one is going to intervene. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Yes, I relate to enduring something God's allowed that feels unbearable. If you've done our studies before, you may know some of my story. For those who don't, my child-birthing experience stretched over a two-and-a-half-day period and came with complications that caused long-term consequences for my health. In response, I allowed my situation to lead me into a season of feeling angry with God. Bitter even. I think that's why I was drawn, like an ocean wave to the shore, to Chapter 11, "Forgiving God."

For several years, I wrestled with my feelings of "needing" to forgive God. My anger toward Him caused me to feel unworthy of Him — like a "less than" Christian. So I pulled away from our God, our comforter and healer, during that season. I especially pulled away from spending time with Him in His Word.

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If Chapter 11 of *Forgiving What You Can't Forget* could be summed up in 11 words, for me it would be these:

"We don't need to forgive God. We need to trust Him" (p. 162).

I wish I would've had those words to read and take hold of during my bitter years. Perhaps then I would've pressed in to God and His Word rather than pull away. Whether you've experienced a time of anger towards God or you simply find yourself in a place of not understanding, and questioning what He's doing or allowing, this lesson is for you.

Let's press in and look at **building our trust in God through Scripture**, because when we know the Truth and live the Truth, it changes everything.

2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT) tells us, *"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right."* So what does Scripture have to say on the topic of trust?

Where to Place Our Trust

Look up [Proverbs 3:5](#).

- Scripture instructs us to place our trust in:
- Scripture warns us not to place our trust in:

This verse was one of my first favorites! God gave it to me early in my Christian faith when He led me to quit my career. A step that made zero sense at the time, and was only the second time I'd ever taken a step that required placing my trust in God (my first being to trust Jesus as my Lord and Savior). Since it's a popular and widely used verse, let's take a little deeper look. Check out what my *Life Application Study Bible Third Edition NIV* has to say about it:

"Leaning has the sense of putting your whole weight on something, resting on and trusting in that person or thing."

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This provides a great visual for what it means to “lean on our own understanding,” doesn’t it? In the original Hebrew, “lean” is *shaan*, meaning “to lean, support oneself.” The *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* expands this a bit to also list: “rely, rest on self, stay.” In other words, to lean on our own understanding, rather than trust God, is to:

- *Support oneself with our own understanding.*
- *Rely on our own understanding.*
- *Rest in our own understanding.*
- *Stay in our own understanding.*

But doesn’t Scripture teach us to support ourselves with, rely on, rest in and stay in *God’s Truth* to seek to better understand and trust *Him*? Could you imagine what would change if we did this all the time? While we’re not going to get it perfect this side of heaven, we can and should still seek to grow our trust in God. So stick with me. It’ll be worth it!

Look up [Psalm 147:5](#), [Isaiah 55:8-9](#), [1 Corinthians 13:12](#), [1 John 3:20](#) and [Romans 8:28](#). Why should we place our trust in God, rather than in our own understanding?

You know those unknowns that plague us in our tough situations? They’re not unknown to God! While He may not reveal everything to us, and we may not fully see, know or understand, we can trust that God does. We can trust He’s working it all out for good.

Friend, I know it doesn’t always feel that way. When we walk the broken roads of trust toward forgiveness, it’s hard to believe good is coming. But that’s when it’s most important to turn to Truth, to turn to Scripture.

We find many examples in the Bible where what God planned or allowed didn’t seem to make sense initially, and even brought about unbearable suffering, but in the end God’s good prevailed. Two of my favorite examples are:

- The story of Joseph (Genesis 37 and 39-50).
- The story of Jesus (from the Last Supper through His Resurrection in the Gospels).

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When I need restored hope and increased trust, I turn to these two stories and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to me. I hope you'll do the same. When you do, I encourage you to watch for where you see God's people trusting in Him and how that trust played out. We'll begin briefly with Joseph's story and later look at a few pieces of Jesus' story.

Throughout Joseph's life, God allowed difficult situations that would be tough for anyone to understand and endure:

- His brothers' hatred for him because he was his father's favored son. ([Genesis 37:4](#))
- Being sold by his brothers to the Midianites, and then by the Midianites to Pharaoh's official Potiphar, making him a slave in Egypt. ([Genesis 37:28](#) and [37:36](#))
- Sexual advances from Potiphar's wife that, though he resisted, landed him in prison through her lies and betrayal. ([Genesis 39:7-20](#))
- Being forgotten in prison for two additional years after having correctly interpreted Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker's dreams. ([Genesis 40](#))
- Having to confront and deal with his brothers when they came to Egypt for food during the famine. (Genesis 42-45)

If you were in Joseph's shoes, can you see how it'd be easy to feel angry with God for allowing all this? And yet, that's not what happened. Hope remained and good prevailed!

Look up [Genesis 39:2](#), [Genesis 39:21-23](#) and [Genesis 41:39-40](#). Who was with Joseph and what was the result?

Look up [Genesis 45:4-8](#). All of the unbearable times Joseph endured led to what good purpose?

Through Joseph's hard times, God was right there with him. Through it all, God provided prosperity, kindness and favor. And here's the best part: God used every hard circumstance to bring about the best good for Joseph, his family and all of Egypt! Friend, God's understanding and plans truly are so much greater than ours. Though it may not always be easy to see or understand, we *can* trust God is always with us and working for our good.

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Looking back at my story, I can see this to be true. What I couldn't understand or see during labor and the three years after, I can now see and understand clearly. God was with me, He provided so much for me, and He used it to lead me to the best good — leading and teaching women here in Bible study and becoming a foster family! I truly don't believe I'd be doing either of those things if God hadn't allowed those difficult experiences.

When has your own limited understanding of a situation caused you to question or get angry with God? What confidence do the verses we've studied, and Joseph's story, give you to place your trust in God, rather than in what you understand or can see?

Our own understanding isn't the only thing Scripture warns us against placing our trust. Look up [Psalm 146:3](#), [Proverbs 28:26](#) and [Jeremiah 17:9](#).

- Scripture also warns us not to place our trust in:

When you're struggling to understand why God allowed something in your life, in what/whom do you tend to put your trust? Circle all that apply.

- Your own understanding/yourself
- People
- Your heart

Looking back at my bitter season, I now recognize I placed my trust in all those wrong places, but especially in my own understanding. I didn't look at everything through the lens of God's Truth. Instead, I scrutinized everything through my own skewed view, through my pain and confusion. This led me to a slew of wrong conclusions, starting with the belief that our God had forsaken me. But that is not the story Scripture tells!

Replacing Lies with God's Truth

Read [Genesis 3:1](#).

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Did you notice the enemy's very first deceptive act recorded in the Bible is when he attacked Eve's trust in God and His Word? This isn't coincidence, friend! The enemy knows if he can keep us from trusting God and His Word, He can keep us on the path of doubt and anger, and off the path that leads to forgiveness, healing and restoration. But here's the good news: We don't have to buy into the enemy's lies! We can learn to recognize them and replace them with Truth.

Let's look at four lies I bought into that caused my trust in God to falter during my season of anger. Let's replace those lies with Truth. As you work through each one, mark (underline, highlight, circle, or star) the lies you relate to. Also mark any of the verses listed that personally speak hope and encouragement to you. You'll use your marked verses at the end of each section to write a prayer.

Lie #1: God has forsaken me.

When I lay in the hospital bed needing, pleading, hoping and believing for God's intervention, but never perceiving it to come, I felt abandoned by Him. That feeling of desertion continued to plague me as I dealt with my unresolved health issues. If I don't keep God's Word before me, this lie can still haunt me 11 years later.

Look up [Matthew 27:45-46](#), [Luke 23:44-46](#), [1 Corinthians 3:16](#), [Deuteronomy 31:8](#) and [Psalm 46:1](#). Listen for and write down what God speaks to you.

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Truth to replace the lie: God never leaves me!

When we feel abandoned and deserted by God, it's okay to cry out to Him, to admit our feelings. Even Jesus did so on the cross. But in the end, like Jesus, it's God we need to place our trust in and "commit our spirit" to. We need to stand fast in the truths that He is in us, goes before us and is always with us. He IS an ever present God we can trust.

In Chapter 11 of *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*, Lysa points us to another effective way to build our trust in God:

"Since trust in relationships is built in part with good communication, then more effectively praying has to play a role in my trust with God." p. 159

Plainly put, **we can use prayer to build our trust in God!** And I don't know of a more effective way to pray, than to pray God's Word! Let's take the verses we last looked up and personalize them into a prayer. Here's my example. Add yours below it.

My God, my God, why did You forsake me? During labor, it felt like You abandoned me! When I face my resulting health issues, even now, it can feel that way. But this is not what Your Truth says. When I'm struggling with this lie, help me remember and declare I am Your temple. You dwell in my midst. You go before me and are with me. You never leave me nor forsake me. Because of these Truths, I am not afraid. I am not discouraged. You are my refuge and strength, my ever-present help in my troubles. To You may I always commit my spirit. My God, my God, thank You for being with me. In Jesus' name, amen.

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Lie #2: God doesn't love me.

Believing the lie God has forsaken me led me to conclude He must not love me. After all, who abandons and allows bad things to happen to those they love, right? But now that we've sorted out God doesn't in fact leave us, let's address the love lie.

Look up [1 John 3:1](#), [Romans 5:8](#), [Romans 8:38-39](#), [Isaiah 54:10](#), [Psalm 136:26](#) and [1 John 4:16](#). Listen for and write down what God speaks to you.

Truth to replace the lie: God loves me!

Sweet friend, God loves you (and me) So. Very. Much. God has filled the pages of Scripture with His love for us! He loves us because we are His children. He sacrificed His own Son for us! We never have to worry *anything* will take or keep His love from us. *Nothing* can separate us from God's love. His love is unfailing and endures forever. We can rely on His love because God IS love.

Choose one or more of the verses we looked up for this Truth and personalize them into a prayer:

Lie #3: I need to forgive God.

Because I felt angry toward God when He failed to intervene and allowed complications that negatively impacted my long term health, I felt like I needed to forgive Him. But this implies that God somehow wronged me. As if He, Himself, had sinned against me.

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Look up [Psalm 25:8](#), [Psalm 92:15](#), [1 John 3:5](#), [Psalm 145:9](#), [Nahum 1:7](#) and [Psalm 119:68](#). Listen for and write down what God speaks to you.

Truth to replace the lie: God is good!

When it comes to feeling angry with God, and feeling like we need to forgive Him for what He's allowed, it's important to remember who He is. God is inherently good. He's upright. There is no wickedness or sin in Him. And He isn't just good to some. He's good to ALL, including you and me. In our times of trouble, we can trust in His goodness and that all He will do will be good.

Choose one or more of the verses we looked up for this Truth and personalize them into a prayer:

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Lie #4: I am unworthy.

Like I mentioned when we started, as I dwelled on the lie that I needed to forgive God, I began to feel unworthy of Him. Those feelings drove me to pull away from God and His Word. But had I spent more time in His Word, that season of my life may have looked so different. Less dark and isolated. If you ever find yourself in that spot, or if you're there now, I hope you'll let these next words from God wash over you and sink deeply into your soul.

Look up [Genesis 1:27](#), [Psalm 139:13-14](#), [1 Peter 2:9](#), [Ephesians 2:10](#), [2 Corinthians 12:9](#) and [Romans 3:23](#). Listen for and write down what God speaks to you.

Truth to replace the lie: I'm chosen by God!

How can we be unworthy if we're created in the image of God and are fearfully and wonderfully made? Yes, we all sin and fall short of the glory of God, but that gap is Jesus sized, sister! It was filled perfectly with our perfect Savior! Let's not, for even one more second, allow the enemy to steal away what Jesus sacrificed for us. We are God's handiwork. Jesus and His grace are sufficient.

Look up [John 19:28-30](#). What three words did Jesus claim? (v. 30)

May your thirst for worthiness forever be quenched in those three words, my friend.

Choose one or more of the verses we looked up for this Truth and personalize them into a prayer:

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Alright, just one more verse to claim before we go! Find and write [Psalm 56:3](#) below. Say it out loud. Make it your personal declaration. If/when needed, swap the word “afraid” with other applicable words.

As we wrap up our lesson on building our trust in God through Scripture and prayer, take a few moments to reflect on God’s trustworthiness. Go to Him one last time in prayer. Praise Him for the specific and personal ways He’s demonstrated His trustworthiness in your circumstances, through His Word, and in this Bible Study Companion. Refer back to your prayer when you’re struggling to trust Him.

Remember, when what God allows feels unbearable, it’s not our forgiveness He needs; it’s our trust. I hope this lesson has helped you to grow that trust.

Learning to trust with you,
Kat

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Lesson 6

Bible Study Companion Leader: Trish Cordell



Hey friends! How are you doing? I mean, *really* doing? I hope you're as excited as I am to continue this journey on *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. I'm so proud of you for hanging in there and digging deep to understand the healing power of forgiveness.

Let me ask you a question. Have you ever thought you've forgiven someone, then their name pops up in conversation and suddenly your whole demeanor changes? Sister, let me be the first to raise my hand and say, me too!

That upper lip snarl is usually a clear indication there's more work that needs to be done. Forgiveness isn't for the weak. Typically, ignoring what needs to be forgiven causes great angst. This angst can rob us of our peace and joy. It's the perfect recipe for the enemy to creep in, bringing bitterness and resentment with him.

However, choosing forgiveness over those negative emotions opens the floodgates of Heaven to do a mighty work in and through us. There's nothing better than the freedom found in forgiveness.

Before we begin this week's lesson, let's pray for one another.

Father God, we thank You for the gift of forgiveness. May our minds be renewed and our hearts softened. We praise You for making a way for forgiveness where we see no way. We know You command us to forgive. We believe and trust You know what's best for Your beloved children. Father, we confess our great need for You and thank You for meeting us where we are. We say "have Your way in us as we take the necessary steps toward forgiving those as You forgive us." On our own, this would be impossible. Yet Your Word says that we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength, and that includes forgiving one another. May it be so in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

It Begins With Me

I used to love gym class. How about you? I didn't love everything we did, but I definitely enjoyed the relief from sitting behind a desk. There were games and exercises I looked forward to and some I didn't. The rope climb was one I didn't enjoy. It was hard.

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Fortunately, there were knots spaced out on the length of the rope that ran from the gym ceiling to the floor. I don't remember much except that the rope's coarseness hurt my hands. Our assignment: to successfully get to the top without falling off. Easier said than done. Looking at that rope from top to bottom made my heart lurch.

My thoughts took me to defeat before I even began. My mind laid out myriad excuses as to why this exercise was unnecessary. You know what? Those excuses never got me out of having to grab on and start climbing. As much as I didn't want to do it, there was no one who was going to do it for me. It was up to me to take the first step.

Forgiveness works the same way. No one can do it for us. We have to take the necessary steps even with lurching hearts. Let's see what Scripture has to say about our part in forgiveness. The blank spaces are for you to fill in.

[Matthew 6:14-15](#)

"For if _____ forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive _____, but if _____ do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive _____ trespasses" (ESV).

[Mark 11:25](#)

"And whenever _____ stand praying, forgive, if _____ have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive _____ trespasses" (ESV).

[2 Corinthians 2:10-11](#)

"Anyone whom _____ forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for _____ sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs" (ESV).

[Ephesians 4:31-32](#)

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from _____, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave _____" (ESV).

[Colossians 3:12-13](#)

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so _____ also must forgive" (ESV).

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What common thread do you see woven throughout these scriptures?

Why do you think it's so important for us to forgive one another?

What types of behavior often follow when we harbor unforgiveness?

Sibling Rivalry

The very first siblings taught us a great deal about unforgiveness. Cain and Abel were the sons of Adam and Eve. Let's take a look at the story of these two brothers. I hope you're ready for some serious drama. This one is full of it. Cue the dramatic overture and read [Genesis 4:1-16](#).

Whoa! See, I told you this story was full of drama. Let's study it a bit deeper to determine where this whole thing went horribly wrong.

What was Cain's job?

What was Abel's job?

Who did the Lord find favor with?

How did Cain respond when the Lord favored Abel's gift over his?

The Lord addressed Cain's attitude with a warning in verses 6 and 7.

"Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it' (NIV).

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Nowhere in that text does God talk to, or about, Abel. It was Cain who needed to answer God's questions and address his own demeanor, actions and emotions.

What other emotions do you think festered in Cain other than anger?

Bitterness was the first thing that popped in my mind. I love how God not only gave Cain a warning; He also gave him an escape. He told him if he did what was right, he would be accepted. He told him sin was crouching at his door but he *"must rule over it."*

This brings to mind 1 Corinthians 10:13 where the Apostle Paul addresses the sin happening in the church at Corinth. He also tells them Jesus will provide a way out.

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it" (NIV).

Both of these verses show us God is with us even in our sin, offering us ways out and waiting for us to take them. He doesn't want us settling into our sin because He knows where it leads. It leads us further and further away from His heart, His peace and His joy.

You may be thinking, *what does the story of Cain and Abel have to do with forgiveness?* Abel didn't do anything wrong. Abel didn't need forgiving. You're right! It goes back to Cain.

Looking Within

We don't have a lot of insight on Cain and Abel's upbringing. We have no idea if they fought or how often. If one brother was continually favored over another or if a sibling rivalry led them to constantly try to outdo one another. However, if you've ever had a sibling, you know there's often friction and arguments.

Sometimes siblings bury the feelings from those arguments instead of settling them. Author Lysa TerKeurst explains this so succinctly when she says on page 190,

"Wrongs we deem were never made right are incredibly stealthy in their ability to sit, quietly seething, until that one more wrong done to us gives them permission to finally scream."

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Now, I'm not making any kind of excuses for Cain. He chose his path. Any type of contentious feelings he held for Abel were his to own and conquer. Just as God told him in Genesis 4:7:

"...you must rule over it" (NIV).

That word "rule" in Hebrew is *mashal* and means "to have dominion over, ruling power over, gain control over." The way we rule over our sin is through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us. It's a battle we don't fight on our own. God equips us to fight it, and because of that, when we cooperate with Him, we will be victorious over our sin, including our unforgiveness.

Forgiveness always begins with us. God told Cain he needed to do what was right. Cain knew he didn't bring God the first fruits from his soil.

You may not be familiar with the term "first fruits." It's a biblical term that derives from God's creation work. Because God created everything that exists, everything belongs to Him. So that which is best and first goes to God because it's His to begin with. In the Old Testament, this meant God's people had to give God the best of their herds (animals) and the best of the land (crops) when bringing a sacrificial offering.

God's response to Cain tells us that Cain did not bring God the best and first of what He had.

What should Cain's demeanor have been towards God, knowing what he did was wrong?

If you said humble and contrite, I'd say you're on the right track.

Unfortunately, that was not Cain's response. Instead of seeking forgiveness for having brought the Lord less than the best, then rectifying the situation, he chose to take his humiliation and anger out on his unsuspecting brother.

Even after he committed murder, his stance was not one of humility. Let's look at Cain's reaction when God called out to him in verse 9.

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What question did God ask Cain?

Why do you think God asked Cain this question?

I mean, it's not like God didn't already know the answer. He knew! His question to Cain was simple and yet altogether complex. God doesn't ask shallow questions. He asks probing questions that ask us to look within. I find it thoroughly intriguing Cain's response was in part a question.

What was Cain's answer to the Lord's question of his brother's whereabouts?

What can we ascertain Cain lacked from his response?

Think about a time you did something wrong. How did it make you feel? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Remorseful
- ☐ Shameful
- ☐ Guilty
- ☐ Disgusted
- ☐ Repentant
- ☐ Fearful
- ☐ Mortified
- ☐ Dismayed

Cain is in a place to confess, ask forgiveness and repent. Yet, he does none of those things.

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Instead, when the Lord decrees His punishment, not only does Cain not seem to regret killing his brother — he appears totally put out by what he'll have to endure. He actually complains about his punishment. He refuses to bow low.

Oh my goodness, how I can relate!

As a teenager, I was caught shoplifting. The store clerk took me to the back of the store and called the police. I was sassy and impertinent. When the authorities asked me to spell my name, I spelled it incorrectly. When they asked other personal questions, I answered with questions. I held no regard for their authority.

Believe it or not, despite my surly attitude, I truly thought they would let me off with a warning since it was the first time I was caught shoplifting.

But it was *because* of my attitude that they put me in a police car and drove me to the station. Did I show remorse? Nope! I wanted to know what happened to the bicycle I rode to the store. Seriously, that was my biggest worry. Their response, “We don’t care about your bike.” Excuse me?

I literally had the nerve to be put out because they caught me doing something I knew was wrong. How dare they!

It took a few years for me to come to terms with what I’d done. In the meantime, I held onto bitterness and resentment for the humiliation I had to endure.

Funny, the tears welling up in my eyes as I write these words lead me to believe the sharing of this story is no accident. I’ve come to realize that there’s a deeper spiritual issue here that I need to address.

It’s just as Lysa stated on page 196:

“Feelings are incredibly helpful indicators of what needs to be addressed.”

The day I got caught stealing was a cry for attention. Oh, I received attention. It just wasn’t the attention my heart needed. And because I didn’t get what I needed, I lashed out. I closed off the “neediness” and welcomed both bitterness and resentment.

FORGIVING *what you* CAN'T FORGET BY LYSA TERKEURST

Can you think of a time when you allowed bitterness or resentment to build up as an answer to a painful situation? Write what happened below and how and why you felt what you did.

How did you move past these negative emotions to healing?

It's okay if you're still working things out. Forgiveness is a process. If you're not there yet, what's the next step you can take to move forward?

After studying these two brothers, maybe like me, you can relate a bit to Cain. While I didn't commit murder, I've harbored the negative or painful emotions that come with feeling unnoticed. Like Cain, I've invited chaos to be front and center in my life. But I'm not called to be an instrument of chaos in the world. As a child of God, I have the gift of peace. I'm called to be an instrument of peace.

John 14:27 reminds us:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (ESV).

Let There Be Peace

Did you hear the song that started playing in my head? No? Let me help you hear it. The lyrics are:

"Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me..."

Read that again with emphasis on the last two words, *"with me."*

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Full disclosure time. What steals your peace? For me, right now, it's this tiny bug that keeps flying in front of my computer screen. True story.

I'm going to make a bold statement. Whatever disrupts **YOUR** peace is not worth it. It's not to say it's not important or relevant, but if it's stealing your peace, friend, it's not worth the cost. However, it's your choice what you choose to hold onto.

The Message paraphrase of Romans 12:17-19 says:

"Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. 'I'll do the judging,' says God. 'I'll take care of it.'"

Let's take a look at the English Standard Version of those same verses:

"Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'"

Did you know you can look up different Scripture translations? I love comparing them. It's like a spiritual feast. Technology provides us with many options to search and study Scripture. Websites like [Bible Hub](#) and [Bible Gateway](#) are great places to start. Bible apps are too!

You can also do a simple Google search to find verses on peace. Go to the Google search bar. Type in your search "Bible verses on peace." It will give you a list of sources to go to that will direct you to verses on peace.

Take a few moments and do a word search on peace.

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What did you find? After you find your verses. Look them up and find them in 2-3 different translations. Write a couple of verse translations here.

After you've written them, what do you notice as you compare them?

God is always speaking to us. But, are we listening? I believe Cain heard the Lord's warning, but I think he was too dejected to really listen. Cain's anger overrode his peace. It's not enough to just listen to God. That's the easy part. It's carrying out/obeying what His Word says that also matters.

Let's look at [James 1:19](#). What does James warn us to do as believers in Christ?

Listening is crucial. Processing what we've heard and asking the Lord to reveal anything in our hearts and/or minds that is contrary to what He says requires humility. We need to bow low before Him. When we come before God with humility, it gives Him the space to show us what's not producing good fruit. It lets Him (and us) know we need His strength, wisdom and discernment. A need for Jesus is never wasted.

In His presence is where we find the peace that surpasses all understanding. Philippians 4:6-7 lays out the beautiful exchange we receive from God when we go to God with whatever is troubling our hearts.

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Read and write [Philippians 4:6-7](#) below. What is the exchange Paul talks about here?

On page 199, Lysa reminds us that:

“Peace is a gift that God gives believers, and that gift is evidence to the world that we are different.”

The gifts God freely gives us are like no other. They are good. They are perfect! How do I know? Read [James 1:17](#).

Now you know too! I'll close with this Word from Jesus in John 14:27:

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (ESV).

Friends, thank you so much for journeying through this lesson with me and with our BSC Team over the last six weeks. Time is a gift from God that's never wasted when we spend time with Him. My hope is that you grow more in love with Christ every day!

Joyful Blessings,
Trish