

# Deeply Rooted in the Discipline of Forgiveness

## Say You're Sorry

When my kids were little, a lot of conversations revolved around the idea of saying sorry. When one kid would hurt another, immediately my response would be, "tell your brother you are sorry." My child would look down at their toes, and say "I'm sorry" without feeling to the sibling they had wronged in some way. They would go through the motions simply because I was standing over them, telling them to do it. After they said sorry, I would have the other child acknowledge their apology and say they were forgiven. Often times their forgiveness was as genuine as the apology.

Sadly as we age, those lessons as children drift away. As we grow older, we tend to not say sorry often. Rarely do we ask for forgiveness. People will hurt us and wrong us. Often they are oblivious to the pain they have caused. Rarely do they apologize.

Forgiveness is a choice. We can choose to forgive others, just as Christ forgave us, or we can choose to hold on to the hurt, the anger, the pain. If we do, it will grow into a bitter root. Hebrews 12:15 says, **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.** I don't do much gardening, but I do know that the weeds always seem to have longer roots than the plant. You have got to pull a weed early, so it doesn't have a chance to grow big roots. The quicker we are to forgive, the easier it is to unroot the ugliness before bitterness and resentment grows.

When we fail to forgive someone (whether they say sorry or not) we hurt ourselves, not them. Nelson Mandela said, *"Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies."* Let's be honest, usually the person we are holding bitterness, anger and unforgiveness towards has no clue we are upset. Their lives have not stopped. They go on with life as if nothing has happened. But we do not. According to the article, *Forgiveness: Your Health Depends on It*, "chronic anger (that's what unforgiveness really is) puts you into a fight-or-flight mode, which results in numerous changes in heart rate, blood pressure and immune responses. Those changes, then, increase the risk of depression, heart disease and diabetes, among other conditions. Forgiveness, however, calms stress levels, leading to improved health." (<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/forgiveness-your-health-depends-on-it>). The only person you are hurting is yourself.

When we fail to forgive we are chained to the past. Unforgiveness keeps that pain alive, and it never lets the wound heal. Christian Author, Philip Yancy, writes this about the importance of forgiveness: *"Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hate. Forgiveness breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness. While dying on the cross, Jesus said, 'Forgive them' - the Roman soldiers, the religious leaders, the disciples who had fled in darkness, even you and me who have denied him so many times. 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do' [Luke 23:34]"* Forgiveness opens the door and lets the prisoner out. Forgiveness sets you free from the past, and allows the wound to heal. Lewis B. Smedes wrote, *"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you."*

Forgiveness is never easy, but it is what we are called to do as Christians. Forgiveness isn't about what we feel. It is a determined choice to do what God commands. Colossians 3:13 says **Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.** Christ forgave our sins, so we should be willing to forgive others.



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## Conversation Starters

Gather with some friends and spend some time going deep with conversation around the topic of forgiveness.

- ◆ When someone treats you wrongly, how do you tend to view them?
- ◆ When has it been hard for you to forgive someone?
- ◆ When is offering forgiveness easier for you? More challenging for you?
- ◆ How did you feel when you asked for forgiveness and the person didn't forgive?
- ◆ Are you quick to forgive others? Are you quick to ask for forgiveness when you have wronged someone? Are you quick to forgive yourself?
- ◆ Do you think "forgive and forget" is a true statement?
- ◆ How do you feel when you don't forgive, and you allow bitterness and anger to take root and grow in your life?
- ◆ Who is someone who seems to be forgiving? Why do you describe them this way? What qualities do you want to emulate in your life?

***"Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a commitment. It is a choice to show mercy, not to hold the offence up against the offender. Forgiveness is an expression of love."*** Gary Chapman

### Additional Resources

Check out our website for more resources to help you be rooted in the discipline of forgiveness <https://usw-womensministries.org/>

Bible Study: *Forgiveness* on 1 John 1:9 by Major Gaylene Yardley

Blog: *The Need to Forgive* by Major Beth Desplancke

Devotional: *Forgiveness* by Major Gaylene Yardley

Craft Idea: *Soap Carving* by Major Gaylene Yardley

## Let it Go Prayer

The definition of forgiveness is essentially the act of pardoning an offender. The Greek word translated "forgiveness" literally means "to let go from one's power, possession, to let go free, let escape." (I know, many of you are probably envisioning Elsa singing "Let it Go" from the Disney movie, *Frozen*). Unforgiveness is when we hold on to the wrong, the hurt, the anger, the resentment.

Bible teacher Beth Moore writes, *"The intent of biblical forgiveness is to cut someone loose. The word picture drawn by the Greek term for unforgiveness is one in which the unforgiven is roped to the back of the unforgiving. How ironic. Unforgiveness is the means by which we securely bind ourselves to that which we hate most. Therefore, the Greek meaning of forgiveness might be demonstrated as the practice of cutting loose the person roped to your back."*

For this prayer activity, you will need a ribbon or yarn and a pair of scissors. Think of a person you need to forgive. Tie a piece of ribbon (string or yarn) around your non-dominant wrist. Envision the person that you need to forgive. Spend some time praying for that person and the situation. Tell God all your feelings and frustrations. All those feelings you have bottled up inside, let them out. The only person you are hurting with these emotions is yourself. Christian author Margaret Feinberg writes, *"When we hold a grudge or cling to animosity, we become shackled to spite and resentment. The only way to dissolve these toxins is through forgiveness."* Unforgiveness is toxic to us. Release those toxins to God. Ask the Lord to help you forgive the person.

When you are ready to let them go, take the scissors and cut the ribbon from your wrist. If feelings of unforgiveness towards that person returns, re-tie a ribbon on your wrist, and go through the process again.



*Read God's Word to learn more about forgiveness.*

## Flourishing in the Word

The Bible has a lot to say about God's forgiveness and the importance of forgiving others. That's what this month's Bible reading plan is all about.

June 1	Genesis 50:15-21	June 16	Acts 9:20-37
June 2	Psalms 86:1-10	June 17	Romans 3:21-26
June 3	Isaiah 55:1-7	June 18	Romans 4:1-8
June 4	Jeremiah 31:31-34	June 19	Romans 8:1-4
June 5	Matthew 5:21-26	June 20	Romans 12:9-21
June 6	Matthew 6:5-15	June 21	2 Corinthians 2:5-11
June 7	Matthew 18:15-35	June 22	Ephesians 1:3-14
June 8	Mark 11:17-25	June 23	Ephesians 4:29-5:2
June 9	Luke 6:27-36	June 24	Colossians 1:3-14
June 10	Luke 7:36-50	June 25	Colossians 2:6-14
June 11	Luke 11:1-4	June 26	Colossians 3:1-17
June 12	Luke 15:11-31	June 27	Philemon 1:1-25
June 13	Luke 17:1-4	June 28	Hebrews 12:14-17
June 14	Luke 23:26-34	June 29	James 2:12-13
June 15	John 8:1-11	June 30	1 John 1:5-2:14

### Flourishing Ideas from the Territory

**Bozeman, MT** had a Mary Kay self-care night.

**Concord, CA** had a "Forever Plaid" program with a quiz, matching types of plaids, and learning what they are and where they come from.

**Fort Collins, CO** had a "Spoon Full of Sugar" program where they learned about speaking with words sweetened with sugar and not soured words. Each were given the gift of a set of measuring spoons.

**Grand Junction, CO** viewed the movie, *The Shack*. It allowed for some good conversation about God and His nature and presence in our lives.

**Fountain Valley, CO** had a baking contest. Although it didn't turn out has hoped, it was fun.

**Klawock, AK** are planning to start a woman's annual tea party/fundraiser.

In **Petersburg, AK** one woman has a "shopping fellowship." She picks up another woman so they can both attend WM together. Afterwards she takes the woman grocery shopping.

**Phoenix Kroc, AZ** had a quilting class, taught by one of the soldiers who is an expert.

**Tacoma, WA** enjoyed a variety of popcorn flavors as they watched a movie.

## An Example of Forgiveness

Corrie ten Boom, a concentration camp survivor, wrote in her book, *Clippings from My Notebook*, these words, “*Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness.*” She not only wrote this but lived it out. She shares a powerful personal story about forgiveness.

*It was at a church service in Munich Germany, that I saw him, the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there—the room full of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, my sister’s pain-blانched face. As the church was emptying, he came up to me. “How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein. To think that, as you say, [God] has washed my sins away!” His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side. Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? “Lord Jesus,” I prayed, “forgive me, and help me to forgive him.” I tried to smile; I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer: “Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me your forgiveness.” As I took the man’s hand, the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart spring a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me, and so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world’s healing hinges, but on God’s. When God tells us to love our enemies, he gives, along with the command, the love itself. (“When We Can’t, God Can,” *Decision*, May 1992, p. 34)*



**“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32**

### Steps to Forgiveness



1. Admit the pain. Don’t try to stuff it or numb your pain. Think it through and acknowledge how it makes you feel. Be honest to God about your emotions.
2. Put yourself in the other person’s shoes. Imagine being on the other side. If that is too painful, think about time when you have wronged someone. How did it make you feel?
3. Remember God’s forgiveness. He forgave your sin and has called us to forgive others. Forgiveness is a command of God.
4. Let go of the hurt. The devil would love for us to be bound up in unforgiveness, anger, bitterness and resentment. Don’t give him a foothold; let it go.
5. Continue to keep forgiving. Forgiveness isn’t a feeling, but a choice. The best way to continue to forgive is to pray for the person, pray for the Lord to continue to work in their life and yours as well.