



Untangling Forgiveness in a Community of *Kindness*

Cultivate Book Study

Week 1 Study Guide: Chapters 1 & 2
Tammy Brown – Why Forgiveness Matters

Forgiveness is a topic that can be difficult for so many of us. By choosing this study, you've committed to pursuing truth and growth in your relationship with God. We're in this together!

Read this week's chapters, then watch our teaching video. Use this study guide – either in a group or on your own – to reflect, respond and pray as you cultivate forgiveness into your life. Your goal is not to get through the content, but to get the content through you! Be REAL, invite God to speak into your life and respond to Him as you study.

Reading Reflection

How were you instructed, encouraged or challenged by this week's reading? Reflect on a word, statement or idea that got your attention. How can you cultivate that truth into your life?

Quick Study

If time only allows for quick study this week, linger here: Forgiveness is a gift to us from God – it is not a way out of the situation, but a way out from underneath the weight, discouragement and grief we may be experiencing. What or who do you need to surrender to God today SO THAT you can experience the freedom forgiveness offers you?

Video Notes

Fill in the blanks following the on-screen prompts:

1. If we're not careful, our past _____ will rob us of our future _____.
2. Withholding forgiveness is our way of having _____ when what others do is out of our control.
3. Forgiveness might _____ others, but it _____ me.
4. We will be _____ to the measure we forgive.
5. Forgiveness awards us an _____ freedom independent of our _____ circumstances.
6. _____ damages REAL people and _____ damage REAL lives.
7. Forgiveness is a _____ to us from God and one that we can _____ to others.

Key Verses

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. Romans 8:5 ESV

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9 ESV

² For just as you judge *and* criticize *and* condemn others, you will be judged *and* criticized *and* condemned, and in accordance with the measure you [use to] deal out to others, it will be dealt out again to you. Matthew 7:2 AMPC

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4 ESV

Reflect & Discuss

1. How do you want to cultivate forgiveness into your life this season? Be specific – is there a situation, relationship, offense, unkindness, misunderstanding or hurt that you want or need to forgive?
2. What are some reasons you've withheld forgiveness now or in the past – e.g., fear, pride, control, justice?
3. Tammy talked about how “white knuckling” our hurt only amplifies our pain and hijacks our mind. How have you experienced that to be true in your life?
4. Lysa TerKeurst says, “Forgiveness isn't always about doing something for a human relationship but rather about being obedient to what God has instructed us to do.” Are you willing to pursue forgiveness if simply as an act of obedience to God?
5. Unforgiveness and unresolved pain make us vulnerable to fear, anger, bitterness and resentment – which are rooted in our flesh, not God's Spirit. How do you need to die to self SO THAT you can grow with God?

Cultivate Forgiveness

God's word challenges us to remember how the Lord forgave us (Colossians 3:13). Our forgiveness came at a price – Jesus' life. It is a finished work *for us*, and a gift given *to us*. Reflect on what Jesus has done for you – the sacrifice, grace and love He offers and freely gives. Tell God right now what His forgiveness means to you and then, receive it.

“*[Forgiveness] it's hard to give. It's amazing to get. But when we receive it freely from the Lord and refuse to give it, something heavy starts to form in our souls.*” Lysa TerKeurst

We remember SO THAT we can respond. Colossians 3:13 also tells us to make allowances for each other's faults and once we remember how we've been forgiven, we “must forgive others.”

As you reflect on how you've been forgiven, how are you challenged to forgive others? Who in your life needs you to make allowances? This might be over a hurtful situation, an offense or even minor differences – those pet peeves that easily offend us. What might a next step be toward pursuing forgiveness – whether that is praying for them, making amends or apologies, seeking reconciliation or simply releasing the situation into God's hands?

If our heart is to follow and obey God, we need to seek His way and trust His process. That means we are REAL with Him, asking Him to search our hearts and show us how we need to grow. Are you seeking truth or spreading gossip? Do you pursue God or please people? Are you cultivating His word into your life SO THAT you can become who He's created you to be? Invite God to show you how you need to grow spiritually, emotionally or relationally.

Dig Deeper

Choose any of these dig deeper opportunities to cultivate more of God's word into your life.

- Read Colossians 3:12-14. Which of the attributes do you believe you currently “wear” well? In which would you like to grow? How could you begin to cultivate that characteristic into your life?
- Read Jeremiah 29:11. When it comes to forgiveness – whether receiving or giving it – what is your hope for the future? Pray, asking God to show you if your hopes are in line with His will and what His heart is for you.
- Read James 5:16. Who in your life can you ask to hold your heart as you confess your hurt and sin? Are you willing to receive that with a teachable spirit?

Kindly Note

Some abuses and wounds are so deep, we can't resolve them on our own. While God is willing and able to walk alongside us in the healing process, we often need spiritual and professional guidance to help us see beyond our hurt to truth and healing. If your situation is one that could benefit from wise counsel and support, we're here to help. You can connect with our ministers and prayer team at sandalschurch.com/next.