



Untangling Forgiveness in a Community of *Kindness*

Cultivate Book Study

Week 2 Study Guide: Chapters 3 & 4
Lori Albee – The Decision to Forgive

Forgiveness is not an easy work, but it is a good work. Don't forget...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: The decision to forgive is a spiritual battle. Reflect on your past and consider your personal hopes, desires and even your relationships. Are there any that you've invested in and found unfulfilled? Could that loss be a tool the enemy is using to trap you in pain, bitterness or unforgiveness? What would it look like for you to let go of that pain SO THAT you can experience the promise God has for you today?

Video Notes

Fill in the blanks following the on-screen prompts:

1. The decision to forgive is a spiritual _____.
2. You will miss out on _____ and _____ in the present if you're unwilling to _____ the pain of your past.
3. The decision to forgive begins with _____.
4. We don't forgive because we _____ like it, we forgive because we _____ Jesus.
5. The decision to forgive is both a _____ and a _____ through our pain.
6. Forgive _____ things quickly and forgive _____ things as quickly as you can.
7. The decision to forgive requires _____ on the One who forgave.

Key Verses

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." James 5:16 NLT

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

"²⁶ And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groaning that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷ And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will." Romans 8:26-27 NLT

Reflect & Discuss

1. Since you've committed to this study have you noticed an increased awareness of the need to forgive or even opportunity to practice forgiveness in your life? Why do you think that is?
2. Lori spoke about putting a stake in the ground to "never" forgive her deepest hurt. As you look back at your life, what are the stakes you've put in the ground? What have those cost you?
3. The world tells us we're entitled to hold on to our hurt, seek retribution and cut people out of our lives. God's word says to be kind, tenderhearted and forgive as we've been forgiven (Ephesians 4:32). How does that challenge you to be set apart from the world?
4. Withholding forgiveness may have its root in one heart, but that decision can create fallout for others. How have you experienced that to be true – whether you are the one withholding or the one feeling the fallout?
5. Lysa TerKeurst says our "ability to heal cannot depend on anyone's choices but our own." Do you find you wait on others to act before you are willing to forgive? How does that "conditional forgiveness" impact your healing and growth?

Cultivate Forgiveness

Lori shared a pathway to forgiveness. First, we **acknowledge our pain** and grieve what has been lost. We give up hope of a better past SO THAT we can choose a different future. We don't surrender our pain to the unknown, but rather into the hands of a just and loving Father who wants us to be healed and whole. If you're ready, sit with God right now and offer Him your hurt.

"The more our pain consumes us, the more it will control us...that person who hurt me may be the cause of the pain. But they are not capable of being the healing of my pain. Or the restorer of my life." Lysa TerKeurst

Next, we need to **be REAL about our story**. Pain swept under the rug eventually finds its way to the surface. We may have been hurt in relationships, but we also heal in relationships. Who is someone in your life you trust to handle your heart well? Will you invite them to pray with you and for you? Reach out this week and ask.

God tells us to be "quick to forgive an offense" (Colossians 3:13). He knows that what we hold onto shapes who we become. The devil would like nothing more than to steal (John 10:10) our potential, and offense is his bait. Are you someone who is easily offended? Do you struggle with a critical spirit or unattainable expectations of yourself and others? To forgive, we need to first own the things that keep us from becoming the best version of ourselves. What do you need to own? **Be REAL with God** and ask Him to help you change and grow.

Lastly, we practice **the discipline of declaration**. This may not fix the situation, but it can move us closer to freedom. Who or what do you need to forgive? Will you believe that the blood of Jesus, shed to forgive you, can cover your circumstances too? Will you trust God as you step into the decision to forgive? If you're ready, declare your willingness to forgive. *[Learn more about this process from Lysa in Ch. 4, pg. 43-44]*

Dig Deeper

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

- Read Luke 23:33-34: This is an example of the gift, promise and power of forgiveness. Take a moment to thank Jesus for the extravagance of His forgiveness. Thank Him for forgiving you.
- Read Hebrews 9:22: According to Old Testament law, what is the requirement for forgiveness?
 - Read Hebrews 9:13-14: Who purifies and forgives us? What did that cost? How does that sacrifice compare to what you have to give up to forgive?
- Read Romans 8:26-28: What do we know God causes for our good? What do we need to do to receive that promise? How do these verses encourage you as you work to cultivate forgiveness into your life?