



Untangling Forgiveness in a Community of *Kindness*

Cultivate Book Study

Week 4 Study Guide: Chapters 8 & 9
Donna Martin – The REAL Truth

Sometimes obedience feels like you're losing, which can make forgiveness a REAL battle. This week, we learn what it means to let go and leave room for God to move.

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 root of withholding forgiveness is often control – we want what we want when we want it. But that mindset leaves little room for God to move. If you believe that God is good, what would it look to live that out in your circumstances – trusting God to do what is good for you?

Video Notes

Fill in the blanks following the on-screen prompts:

1. _____ of what you cannot change.
2. The only _____ that is needed for forgiveness is a _____.
3. We forgive by _____ and wait for our _____ to catch up.
4. Leave _____ for the _____ of God.
5. We do not serve a _____ God.
6. Love _____ wins.
7. Don't become the thing you _____.
8. Do we want to be _____ or do we want to be like _____?
9. God is _____ and He will work it out for your _____.

Key Verses

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.” Romans 12:17-19 NIV

“And will not God surely see to it that justice is done to his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night, and will he delay toward them? I tell you that he will see to it that justice is done for them soon! Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, then will he find faith on earth?” Luke 18:7-8 LEB

Reflect & Discuss

1. While forgiveness can feel hard, Jesus wants to help us. He sees and He knows. As you've begun your journey toward becoming a woman who forgives, how have you experienced Jesus' nearness or guidance?
2. Lysa TerKeurst says "When you are suffering...it's easy to assume God is doing nothing. But we don't serve a do-nothing God. He is always working." Do you trust the work that God wants to do in you and in your life? If that still feels hard, what is it you think you can do better?
3. Read Romans 12:17-19. The command to not repay evil or seek revenge can seem black and white but be far more subtle in real life. The way we choose to share our opinion, speak our mind and do what is "right" in our eyes are all subtle ways we avenge and repay. Be REAL with self...are there any ways you've begun to take matters into your own hands instead of leave room for God? How do you want to trust God more?
4. Donna asked, "Do we want to be right, or do we want to be like Jesus?" That choice is founded in discipline and sacrifice – which are not easy. Think back on a recent choice – did you choose to be right or choose to be like Jesus? What might change in you or around you if you asked this question before you speak, act, etc.?

Cultivate Forgiveness

As it relates to forgiveness, letting go of our feelings, hopes and desires can seem like we're being stripped of our power. We want God to free us of our pain, but we also want to tell Him what should happen to our offender. What if we could see letting go less as a loss and more as a trade?

“Forgiveness doesn't let the other person off the hook. It actually places them in God's hands. And then as you walk through the forgiveness process, it softens your heart.” Lysa TerKeurst

As you consider the person or offense you most need to forgive, is there anything you are holding onto? This could be the relationship, a loss, words spoken or unsaid, or even hope for a different outcome.

We cannot control things out of our control. Is the thing you're holding onto within your power to change or control? For example...could you create space for healing by setting a boundary? Can you make amends through an apology? Is reconciliation an option? If yes, what would a next step be for you to pursue peace (Romans 12:18)?

If change is not within your control, then the only catalyst needed to move you toward forgiveness is a decision. Will you let go and give it to God? Keep in mind – withholding forgiveness always comes at a cost. Bitterness, resentment and the temptation to retaliate rob us of God's best and keep us from becoming who He has created us to be. **Don't become the thing you despise.**

“You don't want to trade in your peace, your maturity, your spiritual progress, your integrity and all the other beauty you add to the world just to add a little suffering to your offender's life or to try and teach them a lesson.” Lysa TerKeurst

Love always wins and that includes loving and valuing your own walk with God. Write down the thing you want to let go. Pray and give it to God, then get rid of it. When [not if] you feel tempted to pick it back up, turn the temptation into something good. Pray for the person or ask God for courage and compassion. Turn your thoughts toward the truth that your obedience is making you more like Jesus...and that work is never wasted.

Dig Deeper

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

- Read Luke 18:1-8. Describe the characteristics of the unjust judge? Describe the characteristics of the widow? How is God different from the unjust judge? What promises can you hold onto about the justice of God?
- Read Psalm 27:13-14. What can you be confident you will see right where you are? What do you need to do in order to see that? How does this encourage you in your desired outcome?
- Read Psalm 32:4-7. How does this encourage you that God is willing and able to exercise justice on your behalf?
- Read Proverbs 6:16-19 in a few different translations for perspective. As followers of Jesus, we are called to love what He loves and hate what He hates. How do these verses challenge you?