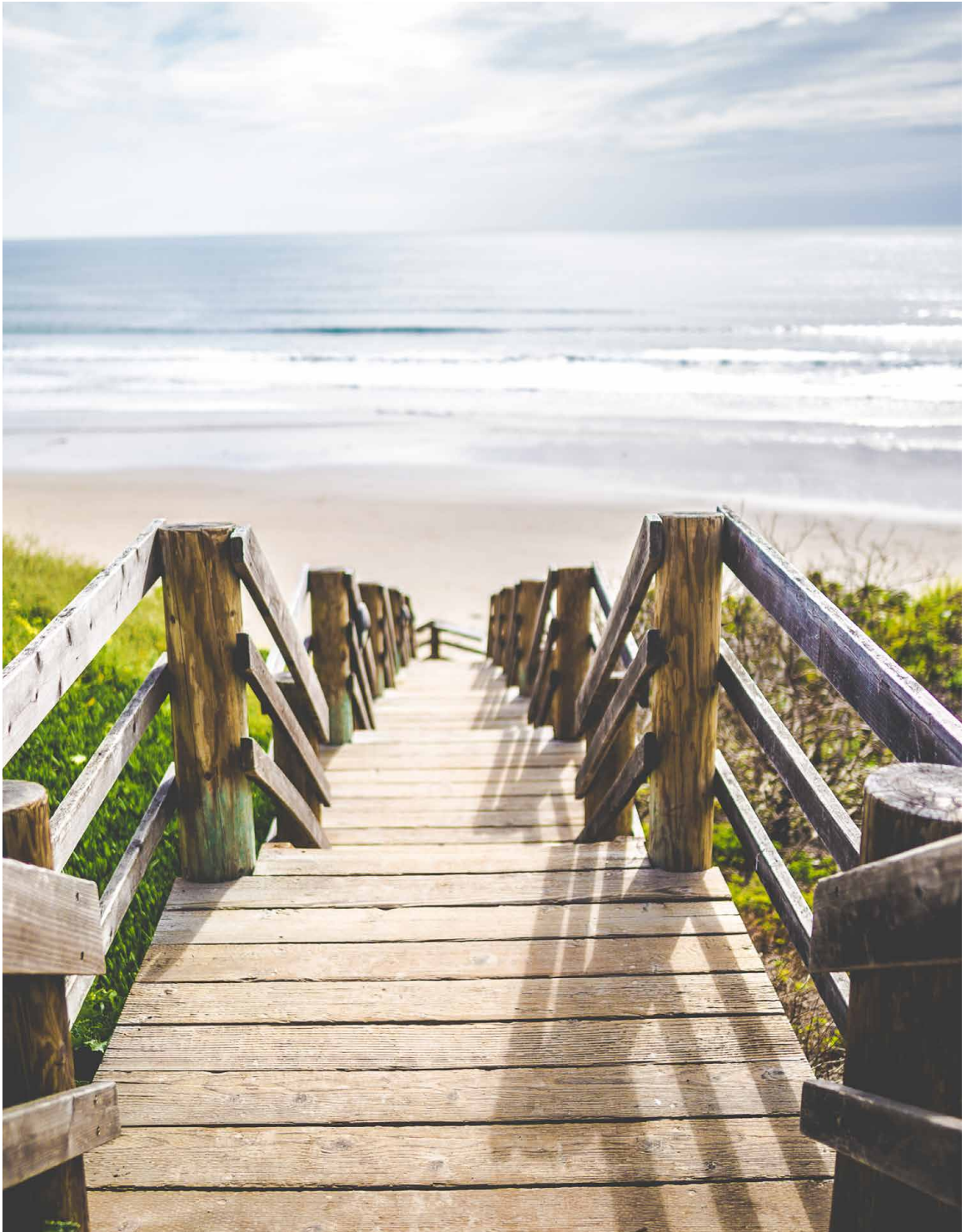


SESSION FIVE

The Healing Power of Forgiveness

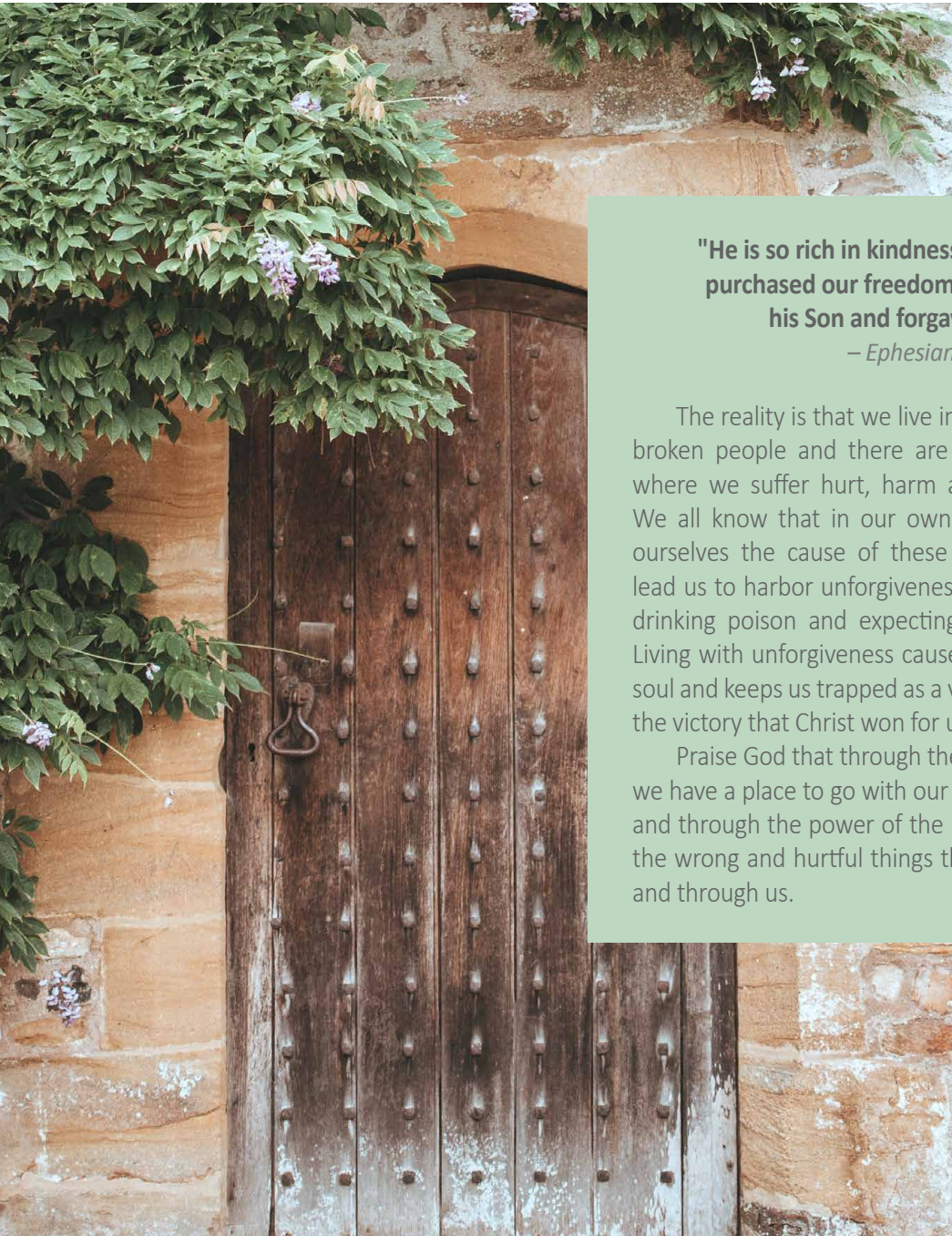
PRAYING WITH OTHERS | LEVEL ONE



SESSION FIVE

The Healing Power of Forgiveness

THE DOORWAY



"He is so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins."

— Ephesians 1:7

The reality is that we live in a fallen world, filled with broken people and there are many times in our lives where we suffer hurt, harm and offense from others. We all know that in our own brokenness we can find ourselves the cause of these things as well. Pain can lead us to harbor unforgiveness in our lives which is like drinking poison and expecting another person to die. Living with unforgiveness causes great harm to our own soul and keeps us trapped as a victim rather than living in the victory that Christ won for us.

Praise God that through the cross of Christ Jesus that we have a place to go with our own pain and brokenness and through the power of the Holy Spirit we can release the wrong and hurtful things that have been done to us and through us.

Quotes About Forgiveness

Read through the following quotes about forgiveness. Mark the two that most resonate with you.

We all agreed that forgiveness is a beautiful idea until we have to practice it.

—CS Lewis.

Human power alone is insufficient to reach full forgiveness. There is an element of forgiveness that is divine. It cannot be reached without God.

—Frank Minirth

When we forgive, we forgive with help over and over. These are the questions: Who has wronged you? What would it look like to be a forgiver? Because how badly do you want to be free?

—Shauna Niequist

Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future.

—Lewis B. Smedes

You will know that forgiveness has begun when you recall those who hurt you and feel the power to wish them well.

—Lewis B. Smedes

Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future.

—Lewis B. Smedes

When we forgive evil we do not excuse it, we do not tolerate it, we do not smother it. We look the evil full in the face, call it what it is, let its horror shock and stun and enrage us, and only then do we forgive it. —Lewis B. Smedes



To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.

—Lewis B Smedes

When you don't forgive someone, in some way that person is in jail, and you are the warden. You're incarcerated, too, because you have to make sure the prisoner stays there.

—Kerney Franston



Consider what you think about Forgiveness.

T **F** I can forgive if the person in the wrong is sorry.

T **F** Forgiveness will set me free to move on with my life.

T **F** Forgiveness will keep me from becoming like the person who hurt me.

T **F** Forgiveness will open further my relationship with God.

T **F** Forgiveness will keep me from becoming bitter.

T **F** Scripture commands us to be forgiving.

T **F** It's impossible to forgive certain things.

T **F** It's impossible for God to forgive certain things.

T **F** Forgiveness refuses to let the person who hurt me have any power over my life.

T **F** Unforgiveness doesn't hurt the perpetrator at all; it hurts only me.

T **F** When we forgive, it is only with God's help ... over and over.

T **F** Forgiveness is a decision; it's not a feeling.

T **F** There is a difference between remembering a transgression and lacking forgiveness.

T **F** It is good to have something "concrete" to help you remember the day you set your offender free.

Examen = review of the day: "The review of the day is an opportunity for us to go back over our day with God—to do it in conversation with God" Do you have a pattern of "examen" or confession?

It's important to recognize the difference between reconciliation and forgiveness. What is it?



What Forgiveness is and What it is Not

- Does NOT mean that any wrongs done to you were acceptable or condoned.
- Does NOT diminish the evil done against you, nor is it a denial of what happened.
- Does NOT necessarily mean forgetting ... it means remembering without the pain.
- Is a key part of not letting those wrongs hurt you any longer.
- Does NOT take away the consequences the other person will face because of his sin.
- Is NOT weakness; it is the most powerful thing you can do; refusing to forgive allows Satan to continue to hurt you; forgiveness stops the destructive power of Satan in one's life.
- Is an act of obedience; God knows it will bring you freedom.
- Is NOT something you do for someone else. It is something that you do for yourself.
- Is NOT reconciliation; it takes two to reconcile but only one to forgive.
- Does NOT depend on the other person's actions and it is not probationary (e.g. saying, "I will forgive you as long as you aren't drinking.")
- Is a gift you give to the offender; trust, on the other hand, must be earned! You must set boundaries.
- Does NOT wait for the offender to repent; unlike God, who provides forgiveness when we repent, humans cannot demand repentance before granting forgiveness IS about how much you trust God to take care of you.
- IS experiencing empathy for the offender, humility about your own sinfulness, and gratitude for being forgiven by God and others.
- Does NOT seek revenge. Revenge never gets what it wants; it never evens the score. Vengeance is personal satisfaction, justice is moral accounting.
- IS letting go of your desire to hurt the other person; simply put, forgiveness means you "cancel a debt."
- IS a difficult and uncomfortable process; when you make a decision to forgive, God provides the grace and strength to forgive and to maintain a heart of forgiveness.
- Does NOT require you to become a "doormat." nor does it require you to allow the offender to hurt you again. You can forgive someone almost anything, but you should not tolerate everything.
- Human forgiveness does NOT do away with human justice.

—Compiled by Louan Hietbrink

STUDY

Read through Psalm 139 below. Mark the section you think you need to focus on the most at this time.

SECTION 1

Awakening to the Presence of God

¹You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.

²You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

³You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.

⁵You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.

⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

⁷Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

⁹If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"

¹²even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

SECTION 2

Celebrating Your Created Goodness

¹³For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

¹⁷How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you.

SECTION 3

Inviting God to Search Your Heart

¹⁹If only you, God, would slay the wicked! Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!

²⁰They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name.

²¹Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?

²²I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.

²³Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Celebrate and Discover

Ask God to show you places where you are growing and changing. Celebrate! Ask God to show you places where you fell short of Christlikeness, and specifically if you need to address any unforgiveness. Jot them below:

DISCUSSION



What are some reasons people don't want to forgive? (means that wrongs are acceptable, might seem to diminish pain etc.)

What is preventing you right now from forgiving?

Do you see a pattern of how you respond when people offend you? Does that response help or hurt you?

MINISTRY

Prayer of Forgiveness

PART 1

Hold up to the Lord all things about the person that trouble you.

Put your hands together and pile up all the things about the person that trouble you. List and name those things that upset you about this person. Verbally state each thing as you are placing them in your hands. When you are finished, turn your hands over and release all of these things to the Lord.

Lord Jesus, I give you each one of these things and ask that you take them and pour your love and healing power through them. I thank you, Lord, that You have the power and the grace to redeem them. I ask you, Lord Jesus, to lift all the pain and hurt that has been involved with each one of these things, that You lift it from my heart, mind, and spirit. I ask that You lift the burden of these things from my shoulders. I give all this to You, Lord, and I trust You to deal with them. Thank you, Lord, for taking each one of these things. Amen.



PART 2

Hold up to the Lord all the things about you that trouble this person.

Put your hands together and pile up all the things about you that trouble the person you seek to forgive. Name these things and pile them up, one by one, in your hands. When you can't think of anything else, turn your hands over and release these things to the Lord.

Lord Jesus, I ask you to pour your love and healing power over these things. I ask You to take them, and I thank You for taking them, dealing with them, and releasing this burden from [name]. I trust You to heal this hurt and pain. Amen.

PART 3

Hold up to the Lord your heart's desire for this person.

Tell the Lord what you would like Him to do in this person's life. (If the person has died, it's still okay to lift up the person and share with the Lord what the desire of your heart is for him.) Name those things and place them in your hands. When you are finished, turn your hands over and give them all to the Lord, just as before.

Lord, I give [name] to you. I thank You that You are able to handle [name] better than anyone else. Bring about your perfect will for [name] and let Your love and healing power flow into him/her. I release [name] into your care. Bless [name]. Amen.

PART 4

Hold up to the Lord your hearts' desire for yourself.

Tell the Lord what you would like Him to do in your life. Give Him the desires of your heart and ask specifically for what you need from Him today. Name a fruit/s of the spirit that you especially need (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control).

Lord, I give myself to You and trust You. I need Your love, mercy and grace. From Your character, I need [fruit/s of the Spirit]. Would You show me Your love for me and what You want to do in my life. Amen.

Help Me to Forgive

A Crafted Prayer for Those Wanting to Forgive

Dear Heavenly Father,

I come to you and ask for your help. I know that I am to forgive others as you have forgiven me, but I find it so hard to do Lord. My mind and heart are full of anger for the things that have been said and done. At times it seems as though the ones that inflict pain and wounds are unrepentant...that they escape judgment. I am angry for what they have taken from me and for the pain they have caused me.

Lord, please help me to see with your eyes. Help me to remember that forgiveness is for me and not for them. Help me to remember that my forgiveness does not depend on them apologizing or repenting...help me to remember that forgiveness is between me and you. Lord, I am releasing my pain and my hurt and my anger to you and I am asking for your help in forgiving them so I can be set free.

I want to forgive and leave this heavy weight at your feet so I can be set free. Lord, their sin and their wrong doing, I leave in your hands for You to deal with it. I no longer want to be held hostage in a prison of anger and bitterness and sadness for what has been done by someone else. I no longer want to serve the sentence for what someone else has done wrong.

Lord, release me from this bondage and free my heart. I want to forgive Lord, as you have forgiven me. You died not only to set me free from my sins, but to set me free from all the things that hold me hostage and keep me from being who

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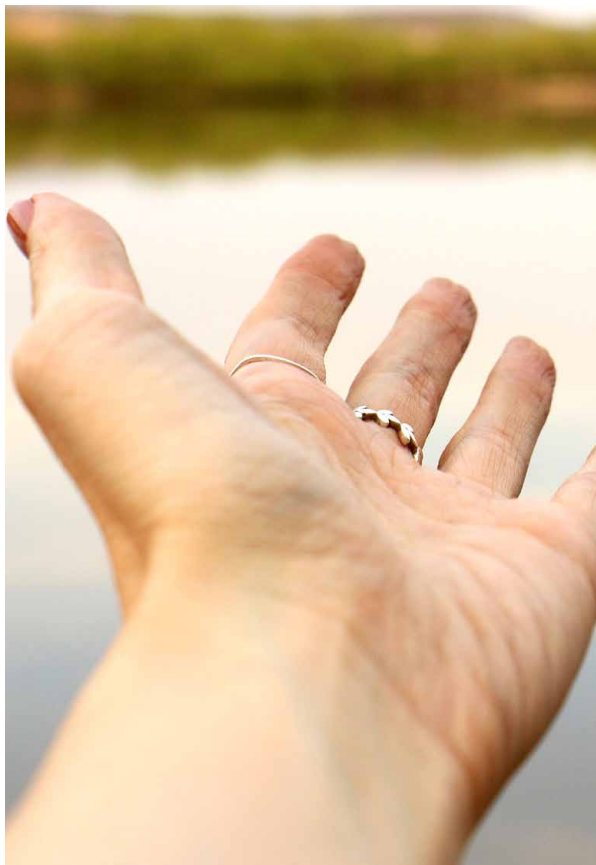
you want me to be. Help me to live in the peace and freedom that you offer.

Lord, from this day forward, I want to be healed from all these negative feelings. Thank you Lord, for helping me...what I can't do....what I don't have the strength to do on my own power, I know I am able to do through Jesus.

Thank you Lord. for helping me to move forward today. Help my mind turn to you when the old feelings and thoughts start to enter my mind. Bind the enemy so he can't bring up the past. Clean the wound out of my heart Lord so it can finally heal and so it can be at peace. Thank you Lord. In the name of Jesus I ask all of these things. Amen.



REACH as a Path to Forgiveness



Recall Hurt

Review the truth of what has happened, not to blame but to acknowledge truth.



Empathize with the Person

Sometimes we glimpse why the person did what they did if we can place ourselves in their shoes.



Altruistic Gift of Forgiveness

Recall the mercy and grace you have from God & give that away.



Commit to Forgive Publicly

Go forward without ruminating on the wrongs. Remember decision.



Hold on to Forgiveness

It is good to have something "concrete" to remember the day you set your offender free. It is not possible to forget—but we can remember with less pain.

—From Biblical Counseling by Tim Clinton

RESOURCES

Books

Forgiving and Reconciling: Bridges to Wholeness and Hope

by Everett L. Worthington

The Art of Forgiving

by Lewis B. Smedes

The Supernatural Power of Forgiveness: Discover How to Escape Your Prison of Pain and Unlock a Life of Freedom

by Kris Vallotton & Jason Vallotton

The Bait of Satan: Living Free from the Deadly Trap of Offense

by John Bevere

Total Forgiveness

by R. T. Kendall

Prayer Toolbox

- Forgiveness/Prayer of Forgiveness

Videos

How to Forgive

by Corrie Ten Boom [YouTube]

