



## **Week 1: Sorry, Not Sorry - Forgiving Yourself** **February 15-16, 2020 | Tim Harlow**

This weekend, Pastor Tim talks kicks off our series on forgiveness by talking about bitterness and how we learn to forgive ourselves.

### **CELEBRATE**

At the beginning of your small group time, it's good to share about your week and share with each other how you're doing. So, spend some time, right now, connecting before jumping into the discussion questions. You can use the *Connect* section as a guide. If you're doing this Study Guide on your own, take a moment to focus your mind on God and what He might want you to hear today.

### **CONNECT**

1. If you had to choose between either Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You" or "Let It Go" from Disney's Frozen as the **ONLY** song you can listen to for the **REST OF YOUR LIFE**, which would you choose? Why?
2. Talk about the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "forgiveness."

Before watching the sermon, or moving on in this study, take a minute to remember that God is always with you. Pray as a group for God to bless your conversation and open your eyes and hearts to what He wants you to hear.

## **REFLECT**

Before moving forward in your study, take a moment and review the key points from this weekend's message.

1. Bitterness causes trouble and defiles many, and we can miss the grace of God when our bitterness gets in the way.
2. Healthy guilt leads us towards God, unhealthy guilt leads us to sorrow.
3. Godly sorrow says "I did something bad," but shame says "I am something bad." Shame doesn't come from God.
4. The Devil wants to use shame to drive you AWAY from God. God wants to use your guilt to draw you TO His grace.

**SCRIPTURES USED IN THE MESSAGE:** Proverbs 4:23, Mark 12:31, Luke 22:33, 61-62; John 21:15-17, Acts 4:13, 2 Corinthians 7:10, Hebrews 12:15, 1 Peter 1:3-4, 1 John 1:9

## **RESPOND**

1. Talk about a thought, phrase, or moment from this weekend's message that resonated with you. What made it stick with you?
2. Bring to mind something in your life that brings you guilt (or shame). Keep that in mind as you go through this study together.
3. Read Ephesians 2:4-9. Read slowly and make a note of any words or phrases that stand out to you. The Christians in Ephesus lived in the shadow of a temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis. Many of the people in Ephesus worshiped the goddess, but the followers of Jesus were trying to tell a different story about who God is and what God desires for his people.
4. Pastor Tim talked about how bitterness is always destructive, never constructive. After reading this whole passage, talk about how the grace of God deals with the bitterness we carry towards others or towards ourselves.
5. Paul says that even though we were in the thick of our mistakes and sin, God chose that moment to send Jesus to rescue us (Eph. 2:4-5). Talk about how God forgiving us before we even considered forgiving ourselves impacts the way you see your guilt or shame. What does it mean for God to have already forgiven you?
6. The feeling forgiveness brings is like being dead and being brought back to life - at least that's the way Paul talks about it here (Ephesians 2:5-6). Talk about how your experience of guilt & shame feels like "death." How does being "alive" again change our approach to the way we live with guilt over what we've done?
7. Pastor Tim said God is a good Father who gives good gifts to His children. Talk about how the grace Paul talks about in this passage (Eph. 2:7-9) is the "gift that keeps on giving." What is one step you need to take today to begin to forgive yourself and accept the unending, unstoppable grace of Jesus towards your guilt and shame?

**Closing Prayer:**

*God, thank you for grace. We don't understand it completely, but that doesn't mean we can't see how good it is. It's just hard to forgive ourselves sometimes. So help us realize that you have already forgiven us, even before we ask, so our job is to reach out and let guilt become the road to wrapping our arms around Your forgiveness. Help us keep doing that, day after day, so we can live without bitterness going forward. We love you.*

Amen.