



Stories that  
change everything.

## STORIES THAT CHANGE EVERYTHING, PART 7: FORGIVENESS

We all want forgiveness, but we're not always eager to give it out. And for some of us, there are some very big hurts that have a grip on our lives. Even the very memory of those things brings up the emotions as fresh as they were when they were new. So how do you move on? How do you push past something where you can finally release it?

**BIG IDEA:** When we don't forgive, it poisons us and poisons our relationships.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*\* Remember the goal is to use the questions to generate discussion, not to complete every one.*

1. What was one of the worst things you did as a child that you asked forgiveness for? What did you learn from your experience?
2. Is the idea of forgiveness difficult for you to understand? What part of it doesn't add up? Do you have an easier time receiving it, or giving it? Why do you think that is?
3. *With your Bible or Bible App, [read Hebrews 12:15](#).*

*See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and to defile many.* [Hebrews 12:15 \(NIV\)](#)

4. Chris says, "Forgiveness hurts us." How is bitterness like a root? What are some similarities with bitterness and the roots of a weed?
5. Chris says, "We forgive because we will need forgiveness." *With your Bible or Bible App, [read Matthew 18:21-35](#).*

*<sup>21</sup> "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" <sup>22</sup> "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven." <sup>23</sup> "There was a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. <sup>24</sup> In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. <sup>25</sup> He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. <sup>26</sup> "But the man fell down before his master and begged him, 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.' <sup>27</sup> Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. <sup>28</sup> "But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. <sup>29</sup> "His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it,' he pleaded. <sup>30</sup> But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full. <sup>31</sup> "When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. <sup>32</sup> Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' <sup>34</sup> Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. <sup>35</sup> "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."*

[Matthew 18:21-35 \(NLT\)](#)

6. Why is it so difficult to forgive those who have severely hurt us? What keeps you from practicing forgiveness?
7. How have you seen unforgiveness and bitterness hurt you?

8. When you think about the people you need to forgive, who comes to mind? What is keeping you from forgiving this person?
9. What can the forgiveness we have received from God teach us about forgiving those who hurt us?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Have you ever been in the place where you think you have forgiven someone, but the next time you see them, talk to them or even think about them, you have to start all over again? How does that make you feel? Like a failure at forgiving? Like you never forgave in the first place? How did you respond when this happened?
2. When you hear about forgiving someone, do you equate forgiving with forgetting? Does that seem like a realistic expectation, or not? Why?
3. If forgiving does not mean forgetting, what do you think forgiving does mean?
4. Forgiving is learning to retrain our minds—accepting the past for what it was, and then making the decision to move forward. For you personally, what does it look like to move forward? What does your life look like when you make the decision to not be defined by the wound done to you?
5. Forgiveness is not a one-time decision, but something we can continue to practice over and over again—sometimes even starting back at square one, when it feels like we should be much further along. No matter where you are in the process, you are somewhere. Where do you think you fall in the process of learning to forgive? What do you think is the next logical step for you to take in that process?

## MOVING FORWARD

Because forgiveness is such a fundamental part of our relationship with Christ, the Bible has much to say about the dangers of bitterness and the delivering power of forgiveness. During your time with God this week, read the following passages and allow God's Word to deliver you from your bitterness and embrace forgiveness: Matthew 18:21-35, Mark 11:25, Job 5:2, Luke 6:28, Ephesians 4:32, Romans 12:17-21, 1 John 1:9 and Romans 8:1.

If there is someone in your life who you need to forgive, take the next steps toward forgiving that person this week. Follow the Biblical principles that Pastor Chris discussed in his message on how to forgive others by first praying for that person and then forgiving that person in the same way God forgave you.

## THE PROCESS

- *Know what to forgive.* Canceling that debt always involves identifying what was taken.
- *Pray for those you need to forgive.* Ask God to help you as you begin the process of forgiveness.
- *Let go and move on.* Thank God for the power of His forgiveness in your life. Tell Him how it has changed you. Ask God to help you remove the stains on your heart that have been created by your bitterness.
- *Forgive daily.* Tell God the things that are holding you back from forgiving others. Ask Him to help you remove these things. Confess your sins and ask God for His forgiveness in cleansing you of your sins.

## CHANGING YOUR MIND

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Matthew 18:34-35