

Cornerstone church of Christ

LOVE AT WORK IN THE BODY

A STUDENT WORKBOOK

Thirteen Lessons on Serving, Speaking and Forgiving

FALL QUARTER 2026

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Forward

Let me tell you what this study is and what it is not, because I would rather you know going in. This is not a study about being nicer to one another. If that is all we do for thirteen weeks then we have wasted a quarter, and you could get the same thing off a calendar in a doctor's office. This is a study about what actually holds a congregation together, and about what happens when it comes loose.

Now where did all of this start? There was a church one time that had everything. Every gift you could name. Enriched in all speech and all knowledge, and the apostle Paul said so himself before he said one word about their problems. And that church was coming apart at the seams. They were lining up behind their favorite preachers. They were taking each other to court. They were coming to the Lord's table and one was going hungry while another one was getting drunk.

Gifted. Capable. Well taught. And dividing.

So what does that tell us? It tells us that whatever holds a church together is not on the list of things that church had. And it tells us that a congregation can look fine on paper and be coming apart anyway.

We are going to spend thirteen weeks on three things. How we serve one another. How we talk to one another. And how we forgive one another. Four lessons, four lessons, and five, because that last one, forgiveness, is the hardest and it needs some more attention.

A few things about how this workbook works.

You will notice very quickly that I do not print the passages out for you. That is on purpose. This workbook is going to send you to your Bible over and over again, and you are going to look the passages up yourself, and you are going to write down what you find.

A person remembers what he digs out. He forgets what he was handed.

So bring your Bible, and I mean every week.

You will also notice there is no answer key in the back. That is on purpose too. Some of these questions have one right answer and you will find it in the text. Some of them do not, and where that is the case I will say so. And one more thing, and I want to be upfront on this. There are places in this study where careful brethren have differing viewpoints on matters. When we get to one of those, I am going to lay the options out as fairly as I know how and I am going to tell you which way I lean, and then I am going to leave it with you. My understanding of Romans 14 restricts me from binding my own conclusions on my brother as though they were the doctrine of God. Where the Bible speaks, we will speak, and we will speak plainly. Where it does not, you will have to form your own personal convictions, and I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO CHANGE MY MIND!

Now, a warning. Lesson 12 deals with forgiveness inside a family. Some of you are dealing with something old and it is going to come up that morning. Nothing in this study is going to tell you that forgiving somebody means going back to them. Those are two different things and we will keep them separate. And if what you are dealing with is bigger than a workbook page, come find me.

Let us now begin our study on love at work in the body.

How to Use This Workbook

Before class. Every lesson opens with a reading assignment. Do it. It is usually one or two chapters and it takes about ten minutes. The lessons are written on the assumption that you have read the text once already. During class. Write in this book. Fill the white space. The answer lines are short on purpose; if you need more room, use the notes pages in the back and write the lesson number beside it.

When you see a list of references like this:

Read the following passages to help answer this question:

Romans 12:4-5

Ephesians 4:16

Look every one of them up and write what you find beside it. Do not skip ahead to the next question. The looking up IS the lesson.

When you see "In your own words", that means in your own words. Not the words of the verse copied over. Say it the way you would say it to somebody at work.

When you see "In your opinion", that means there is not one right answer and I want yours.

When you see a "BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK" box, that is a question somebody in this class is already thinking. We face it in print rather than pretending nobody wondered.

When you see "Let's Summarize here", that is me stating a conclusion so we can see the application. Argue with it if you disagree. Bring the passage.

At the end of every lesson there is a place to write what you will actually do that week. That is the point of the whole thing. A workbook full of correct answers and an unchanged life has failed.

LESSON 1

THE PART THAT COUNTED ITSELF OUT

1 Corinthians 12:14-27

Reading before class: 1 Corinthians 1 and 1 Corinthians 12.

Before we open the text, I want you to answer a question about something that has nothing to do with church.

1. Think of any club, any team, any organization you have ever belonged to. What makes a person a member of it? Give me three things.

2. Now, before we go one step further, write your own definition of what makes a person a real member of a local congregation. Put it in your own words. We will come back to this at the end of the lesson, so do not skip it.

THE CHURCH THIS WAS WRITTEN TO

Most of us have read 1 Corinthians 12 without knowing much about the people it was written to and it changes the chapter when you do.

3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:4-7. List everything Paul thanks God for about this congregation, before he says one word about their problems.

4. Now read the following passages and note what was going on in that same church:

1 Corinthians 1:10-12 _____

1 Corinthians 3:3 _____

1 Corinthians 6:7 _____

1 Corinthians 11:18, 21 _____

5. Put those two lists side by side. In your own words, what kind of church was this?

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. This was not a weak church. It had every gift and it was well taught.
2. It was coming apart anyway.
3. Therefore whatever holds a church together is NOT on the list of things this church had.

PAUL LETS THE BODY PARTS TALK _____

Now look at 1 Corinthians 12 and notice something the apostle does here that he does almost nowhere else in his writing. He puts words in the mouths of body parts. I want us to listen very carefully to what they say, because these are the two ways a member gets written off and they run in opposite directions.

6. Read 1 Corinthians 12:14. Paul does not say a body HAS many members. What does he actually say? What assumption is he going after?

7. Read 1 Corinthians 12:15 and 12:16. Write out the sentence each part says about itself.

The foot: _____

The ear: _____

8. Here is the one I want you to think hardest about. Neither one of them looked at the body. What did each of them look at instead and what did they conclude from it?

9. Paul gives the same answer to the foot and to the ear, word for word. Write it out. (V 15, 16)

10. Notice what Paul does NOT do here. He does not tell the foot to think better of himself. He does not tell the foot that the church appreciates him. What is NOT in Paul's answer and why does that matter?

TWO QUESTIONS HE NEVER ANSWERS

11. Read 1 Corinthians 12:17. Write out the two questions Paul asks.

12. Does he answer either one of them? Why?

THE SENTENCE THE WHOLE CHAPTER RESTS ON

13. Read 1 Corinthians 12:18 slowly, two or three times. There are three things in that verse and I want you to pull each one out.

Who does the placing? _____

How many at a time? _____

On what basis? _____

14. Now put verse 18 up against what the foot said in verse 15. If God did the placing, what happens to the foot's argument?

15. When a man says he is not really a part of this congregation, who is he actually disagreeing with?
-

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. God placed the members. Not the members, not the congregation, not a process.
2. He placed them one at a time, individually.
3. He placed them just as He desired, which means on purpose and not as an afterthought.
4. Therefore a member cannot mentally check out from a body God assembled.

THE SECOND ERROR AND WHO SAYS IT

16. Read 1 Corinthians 12:21. What is said this time and who says it?
-

17. Pay attention to who is speaking. In verses 15 and 16 it was the foot and the ear. Now it is the eye and the head. What is the difference between those two sets of body parts?
-

THE PARTS THAT SEEM WEAK

18. Read 1 Corinthians 12:22. There are two words in that verse doing heavy work. Focus on the word seem first. What does that word admit and what does it deny?
-

19. Note the difference between that word and the words we might have used, like welcome, or included, or appreciated. What does Paul's word claim that those words do not?
-

20. Read 1 Corinthians 12:23 and 12:24. Paul describes something every person in this room did about two hours ago without thinking about it. What is it?
-

WHAT GOD WAS AFTER

- 21.** Read 1 Corinthians 12:24 again, the second half. This is the second time in this chapter that God is the one doing something. What did He do the first time (V 18) and what does He do here?

V 18: _____

V 24: _____

- 22.** Now read 1 Corinthians 12:25. There are two small words at the front of that verse that tell you the whole point of everything Paul has been saying. What are they?

- 23.** Paul says the members are to have the same care for one another. He does not say the same job. What is the difference and why does it matter?

HOW YOU CAN TELL WHETHER IT IS WORKING

- 24.** Read 1 Corinthians 12:26. Write out what happens when one member suffers and what happens when one member is honored.

- 25.** Now be honest. When somebody in this congregation is hurting on a given Sunday and you do not know about it and your week goes on exactly the same, what does verse 26 say about that?

- 26.** Read 1 Corinthians 12:27. Paul does not say the church is LIKE a body. What does he say? And what one word keeps this from being only a statement about the group?

NOW TRACE ONE WORD

I want us to do something here that will take about five minutes and will change how you read this whole letter. Keep a finger in chapter 12 and turn back to chapter 1.

- 27.** Read the following three verses and write down the one word that appears in all three:

1 Corinthians 1:10 _____

1 Corinthians 11:18 _____

1 Corinthians 12:25 _____

The word: _____

- 28.** Now note what is happening in each one. This is the important part.

In 1:10, Paul is _____

In 11:18, the same problem has _____

In 12:25, it is no longer a report of the problem, it is _____

- 29.** Your English Bible uses divisions in the first two and division in the third. It is the same Greek noun all three times. It is the word schisma, and we get our word schism from it. Its root verb means to tear apart or split. In your own words, what does that trace prove about why chapter 12 is in this letter at all?

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. Paul opens this letter by naming splits among them (1:10).
2. By chapter 11 the splitting has reached the Lord's table (11:18).
3. In chapter 12 he says God composed the body so there would be no split in it (12:25).
4. Therefore chapter 12 is not a change of subject. It is the answer to chapter 1. The body is not an illustration Paul reached for. It is God's own solution to this church's actual problem.

WORD STUDY · SCHISMA

The word: schisma, a noun built on the verb schizō, which means to tear apart, tear or split.

How the New Testament uses it: two ways. Two times it means a literal tear, as in Matthew 9:16, where a patch pulls away from a garment and a worse tear results. Six times it means the division of a group into opposing factions.

Why it matters here: 1 Corinthians 1:10, 11:18 and 12:25 all use this same noun, and all three carry the faction sense. Your English Bible hides the connection by printing a plural in the first two and a singular in the third. Now be careful with the picture, because this is where people overreach. The root verb means to tear, and the noun does mean a cloth tear elsewhere in the New Testament. But in these three verses it means faction, not fabric. The torn cloth is where the word came from. It is not what Paul is picturing in chapter 12, and the argument does not need it.

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. Lemma σχίσμα under the root √σχίζω, "tear apart; tear; split"; senses tagged schism 6 and tear 3. Lexicons consulted: Kittel et al.; Strong, whose gloss runs "split; gap; schism; division; rent." Full entries in Works Cited.

And note this: the main point needs no Greek at all. Three verses, one letter, one problem, and you can trace it in any English Bible.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"If God placed every member on purpose, then what do you say about the member who does nothing?"

That question is going to come up and it deserves a straight answer instead of a dodge.

Verse 18 is answering one specific man. It is answering the man who says I do not belong here and it settles that question completely. God put him here, one at a time, just as He desired.

Verse 18 is NOT addressing the man who belongs and does nothing. That is a real question and it is a different question and this passage is not where it gets taken up. We will come to it in Lesson 3, when Peter calls a Christian a steward of what he has received.

So the honest answer has two halves. Do not use verse 18 to excuse a man who does nothing, as though being placed by God were the same thing as being useful. And do not use it as a club on a man who has not yet found his place. The verse establishes worth and placement. It says nothing at all about output.

FOR YOUR LIFE

- 30.** Look back at your answer to question 2, where you defined what makes a person a real member. Would you change it now? If so, what changed?

- 31.** Question 1 probably gave you something like: show up, keep the rules and give. A person can do all three of those and still be the eye saying "I have no need of you." In your opinion, what is the difference between being in good standing and being connected?

- 32.** Can you name three people in this congregation who are suffering right now? If you cannot get to three, is that a memory problem, or is it verse 26?

- 33.** In your opinion, which error is more common among us: people counting themselves out, or people counting others out? Which one are YOU more likely to commit? Why or why not?

THIS WEEK

- 34.** Name one member of this congregation whose part is easy to overlook.

- 35.** Write one thing you will do for that person this week. Make it small enough that you will actually do it and put a day on it.

Bring this workbook back next week. I am going to ask whether you did it. I am not going to ask who you wrote.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 2: When You Are Tired of Doing Good.

Read before class: Galatians 6 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

One thing to watch for: in Galatians 6:9 there are two bad things that can happen to a person who is doing good. See if you can find both of them and notice which one Paul puts first.

LESSON 2

WHEN YOU ARE TIRED OF DOING GOOD

GALATIANS 6:6-10

Reading before class: Galatians 6 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

Last week we settled that God placed you in this body on purpose. This week we take up what happens ten years later, when you are still here and still working and nobody has said anything about it in a long while.

1. Think of something you have kept doing for years that nobody thanked you for. Do not write what it was. Write what kept you doing it.

-
2. In your own words, what is the difference between a person who quits and a person who slows down until he has quit without noticing? We will come back to this.
-

TWO THINGS THAT GO WRONG, AND ONE COMES FIRST

I asked you last week to watch for two bad things in Galatians 6:9. Let us start there.

3. Read Galatians 6:9. Write out the two things Paul says can happen to a person who is doing good.

The first: _____

The second: _____

4. Notice the order. Which one does Paul put first, and which one is the thing everybody around you can actually see?

-
5. In your own words, what is the difference between the two? Say it the way you would say it to somebody at work.
-

6. Here is the one to think hardest about. If the first one comes first and nobody can see it, how long can a person be in trouble before anybody knows?
-

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. Paul names two failures, not one.
2. The inward one comes first and it is invisible.
3. The visible collapse is the second thing, not the first.
4. Therefore by the time a congregation notices somebody has quit, the quitting happened a long time ago.

THE LAW UNDERNEATH THE WHOLE PARAGRAPH

7. Read Galatians 6:7. What does Paul say about God, and what does he say about sowing?
-

8. Read Galatians 6:8. Paul gives two sowings and two harvests. Set them side by side.

Sows to the flesh, reaps: _____

Sows to the Spirit, reaps: _____

9. Now put verse 9 back against verses 7 and 8. Verse 9 begins with a promise about reaping. What is that promise resting on?
-

10. In your opinion, why would a man who believes verse 7 still grow tired in verse 9?
-

THE PROBLEM IS THE TIMING

11. Read Galatians 6:9 again and find the phrase that tells you when the reaping happens.
-

12. Whose "due time" is it? Look at verse 7 again before you answer.

13. A farmer plants in the spring and he is not discouraged in June that there is no harvest yet. Why not? And what does he know that a discouraged Christian has forgotten?

14. Paul does not say we will reap if we work harder. Read the verse once more. What is the condition he actually attaches?

DRAW THE LIFETIME

Get a pencil for this one. Draw a line all the way across the space below. Put the year you were born at the left end and put today somewhere along it.

15. Mark on that line every stretch when you were serving somebody in this congregation or in your family. Then mark the stretches when you were not.

16. Look at your gaps. What ended each one of them? Was it a decision, or was it just a season running out?

17. Now mark the place on that line where you are standing today. In your opinion, is the stretch you are in now the longest one, or does it only feel that way?

WHILE WE HAVE OPPORTUNITY

18. Read Galatians 6:10. Paul puts a time limit on something. What is it?

19. He also puts an order on it. To whom do we do good, and who gets named especially?

20. Note carefully that "especially" is not "only." What would go wrong in a congregation that read it as "only"?

FOUR WORDS FOR A TIRED WORKER

21. Read 1 Corinthians 15:58. Paul stacks four things there. Pull each one out.

22. The last one is not an action at all. What is it, and why would Paul put a thing you KNOW in a list of things you DO?

23. Read the last five words of that verse. What exactly is promised, and what is not promised?

24. Now look at 1 Corinthians 15:58. Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-57 first, then read verse 58 again. What is the "therefore" there for?

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. The command is to keep working.
2. The reason attached is not results. The reason is knowledge.
3. That knowledge is the resurrection, which is the whole chapter standing behind the verse.
4. Therefore a worker's endurance rests on something that has already happened, not on something he is waiting to see.

IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON

- 25.** Read 2 Timothy 4:2. Write the command and the two seasons.

-
- 26.** Here is a real question and this class will not all answer it alike. Whose season is it? Is Paul telling Timothy to preach whether or not the PEOPLE are ready to hear it, or whether or not TIMOTHY feels like preaching it? Read verses 3 through 5 before you answer, and give your reasons.
-
-

- 27.** Read 2 Timothy 4:5. Paul gives four more commands. Which one of them assumes the work is going to be hard?
-

WORD STUDY · LOSE HEART AND GROW WEARY

Two different Greek words, and they are not even relatives. Galatians 6:9 uses one word for "lose heart" and a different one for "grow weary," and they come off entirely different roots.

"Lose heart" is built on the ordinary Greek word for bad. Its one meaning in the New Testament is to be disheartened, to lose spirit. It is the word behind "they ought to pray and not to lose heart" in Luke 18:1, and behind Paul asking the Ephesians not to lose heart over his troubles (Ephesians 3:13).

"Grow weary" is built on the word for loosing or untying. The same root gives the word for being disabled or paralyzed. Its meanings are to be exhausted and to collapse from fatigue, and it is the word used of a crowd Jesus would not send home hungry in case "they might faint on the way" (Matthew 15:32).

So Paul names two different failures. One is the spirit going out of a man. The other is his strength coming untied and going slack.

Now here is an honest catch, and it is worth your knowing. Your English Bible does not keep these two labels fixed. In Hebrews 12:3 the same word rendered "grow weary" here is rendered "lose heart," and in 2 Thessalonians 3:13 the word rendered "lose heart" here is rendered "grow weary of." The Greek words are steady; the English clothes get swapped. So the observation above is about this verse, and you cannot take the English phrases into a concordance and expect them to hold.

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. Lemmas ἐγκακέω "be discouraged," sense to be disheartened 6 of 6, on the root √κακος; and ἐκλύω "give out; become weary," senses to be exhausted 3 and to collapse from fatigue 3, on the root √λυω. Lexicons consulted: Kittel et al.; Liddell et al. Full entries in Works Cited.

And note this: the verse does not need one word of this. Paul warns about two things in one sentence and he puts one of them first, and you can see both in plain English.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Is this telling me I am never allowed to rest? Because I am tired."

No, and it would be a cruel reading of the passage to say so.

Notice what Paul does NOT say. He does not say do not get tired. Tired is not the sin here and Paul never treats it as one. Our Lord slept in a boat in a storm, and He told His own apostles to come away and rest a while. What Paul warns against is the quitting, not the tiredness. Verse 9 is aimed at the man who has concluded it is not worth it, and that is a judgment about God's harvest rather than a report about his own body. So the honest answer has two halves. A tired worker needs rest. A discouraged worker needs verse 7. Those are two different needs and handing a man the wrong one does damage. If you are worn out, rest and come back. If you have quietly decided the sowing does not pay, that is what this lesson is about, and no amount of sleep will touch it.

FOR YOUR LIFE

28. Look back at your answer to question 2. Would you change it now? If so, what changed?

29. Think of somebody in this congregation who has been doing the same quiet job for years. In your opinion, what would it take to make that person lose heart? Be specific.

30. Verse 9 says the harvest comes in due time. Name one thing you have sown that you have not seen anything come of yet.

31. Be honest with yourself here. Is there anything you have already quit doing without ever deciding to quit? Nobody is reading this but you.

THIS WEEK

32. Verse 10 says while we have opportunity. Name one opportunity in front of you this week that will not be there in a month.

33. Write down what you will do about it and put a day on it.

Bring this workbook back next week. Question 29 is going to matter more than it looks like it does right now.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 3: Somebody Else's Property.

Read before class: 1 Peter 4 and Romans 12.

One thing to watch for: in 1 Peter 4:10, notice what Peter calls a Christian who has received a gift. It is not a word about talent and it is not a word about ability. It is a word about a man handling property that belongs to somebody else.

LESSON 3

SOMEBODY ELSE'S PROPERTY

1 PETER 4:10-11

Reading before class: 1 Peter 4 and Romans 12.

I want to start this one somewhere other than church.

1. Somebody hands you the keys to his truck for the weekend. Write down three things you would do differently with that truck than you would with your own.

2. Now write your own definition of a spiritual gift. Whatever comes to mind. We will come back to this at the end, so do not skip it.

THE WORD PETER PICKED

I told you last week to watch for what Peter calls a Christian who has received something. Let us go get it.

3. Read 1 Peter 4:10. Write out the word Peter uses for the person doing the serving.

4. That is not a word about talent and it is not a word about ability. What does that word actually describe? Say it in your own words.

5. Read Luke 16:1-2. A man with the same job title gets called in. What is he asked to produce, and what happens to him?

6. Put those two passages together. If a Christian is a steward, then two things follow that do not follow from the word "talent." Name both.

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. Peter does not call you gifted. He calls you a steward.
2. A talent is something you have. A stewardship is something you answer for.
3. Therefore the question is never whether you are gifted enough. The question is what you are doing with property that is not yours.

WHOSE IT IS, AND HOW MUCH OF IT THERE IS

7. Read 1 Peter 4:10 again, the last phrase. Whose grace are these gifts called?

8. Peter puts one word in front of "grace" that describes how much variety is in it. What is that word, and what would be lost if he had left it out?

9. Read 1 Peter 4:10 once more and find the two words that tell you who received something. How many people in this congregation are left out by those two words?

EVERYTHING FITS IN ONE OF TWO BUCKETS

10. Read 1 Peter 4:11. Peter sorts every possible service into two kinds. Name them.

11. He puts a standard on each one. Write both standards down.

The one who speaks: _____

The one who serves: _____

12. Look hard at the second standard. Whose strength is the servant working out of? What does that do to the excuse "I do not have it in me"?
-

13. Read the last part of verse 11. When a steward speaks and serves that way, who ends up getting the credit?
-

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. There are two kinds of service and everybody is doing one of them.
2. Speaking is measured against God's own utterances, not against how it went over.
3. Serving runs on strength God supplies, so being out of strength is not the disqualification we treat it as.
4. Therefore the whole arrangement is built to send the glory somewhere other than the servant.

THINK SOUNDLY ABOUT YOURSELF

14. Read Romans 12:3. Paul warns against one kind of thinking and commands another. Write both.

Do not think: _____

Do think: _____

15. Most of us read that verse as being about pride only. Look at it again. Is thinking LESS of yourself than you ought also a failure of sound judgment? Give your reasons.
-

16. Go back to Lesson 1 for a second. The foot said "I am not a part of the body." Was the foot's problem humility, or was it bad arithmetic?
-

17. Read Romans 12:4-5. Paul says the members do not all have the same what?
-

SEVEN JOBS, AND EACH ONE COMES WITH A MANNER

- 18.** Read Romans 12:6-8 slowly. List the seven items Paul names.

- 19.** Now go back through and notice that Paul does not just name the job. He attaches something to each one. What does he attach to giving, to leading and to showing mercy?

Giving:

Leading:

Showing mercy:

- 20.** Those three are not descriptions of the work. They are descriptions of the worker. Why would God care about the manner and not only the deed?

- 21.** In your opinion, which is worse in a congregation: mercy that never gets shown, or mercy shown without cheerfulness? Why or why not?

TAKE THE INVENTORY

This part is not a test and there is no score. Work it honestly and be ready to compare notes in class.

- 22.** List three things you are actually good at. Any three. They do not have to sound spiritual.

- 23.** List three things this congregation needs done that you have watched somebody else do.

24. Draw a line between any item in question 22 and any item in question 23 that could match up. How many lines did you draw?

25. Now the hard one. If you drew no lines at all, is that because there is no match, or because you have never looked for one?

WORD STUDY · STEWARD

The word: *oikonomos* is a compound, and you can see both halves in it. One half is the word for a house. The other is the word for law, in the sense of managing or ordering something. It is where our word economy comes from.

What it describes: the man who ran another man's household, or estate, or accounts. Not the owner. The owner is somewhere else and this man answers to him. Luke uses the word three times in two chapters, and in Luke 16:2 the owner walks in and asks the steward for an accounting.

Which sense is in our verse. The New Testament uses the word two main ways: the household manager, and a broader one, somebody who supervises or has charge and direction of something. 1 Peter 4:10 carries the broader one. Peter is not making you a butler. He is putting you in charge of something.

And the verse says out loud whose something it is. Stewards of the manifold grace of God. You do not have to get that out of the Greek. It's there in your English Bible.

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. Lemma *οἰκονόμος*, 10 occurrences, listed under both roots *οἶκος* "house" and *νομος* "law"; senses administrator or supervisor 6, household manager 4, city treasurer 1. Lexicons consulted: Kittel et al.; Strong, whose gloss runs "house-distributor; manager; overseer; agent; treasurer." Full entries in Works Cited.

And note this: the argument of this lesson survives without a word of Greek. Read Luke 16:1-2 and you will see exactly what a steward is. A man who gets asked for an accounting.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Are the gifts in Romans 12 and 1 Peter 4 the miraculous kind, and are they still around today?"

Somebody is going to ask it, so let us have it out in the open.

Brethren who love the Bible have different views here, and I am not going to pretend otherwise. Some hold that the lists in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 are entirely miraculous and confirmatory, given while the New Testament was being delivered and ceasing when it was complete. Others hold that the lists mix the miraculous with the ordinary, pointing out that giving, leading and showing mercy do not look miraculous in any age. Both groups are reading the same texts carefully.

Here is what does not depend on that question. Whichever way a person views, 1 Peter 4:10 still says each one has received something, still calls him a steward of it and still tells him to employ it in serving. The command in front of you this morning does not wait on the answer.

This is one of those places I told you about in the Forward. I will lay the case out in class as fairly as I know how and tell you where I lean, and then it stays yours. My understanding of Romans 14 will not let me bind my conclusion on you as though it were the doctrine of God.

FOR YOUR LIFE

- 26.** Look back at your answer to question 2. Would you change your definition now? What changed?
-
- 27.** In Lesson 1 we left a question open. We said verse 18 answers the man who thinks he does not belong, and that it says nothing about the man who belongs and does nothing. Answer it now from 1 Peter 4:10. What does this passage say to that man?
-
-
- 28.** A steward can fail two ways: he can waste what he was given, or he can bury it and hand it back untouched. In your opinion, which failure is more common among us?
-

- 29.** Read Matthew 25:14-15. Note that the master handed out different amounts. Does the size of the stewardship change the standard the steward is held to?
-

THIS WEEK

- 30.** Go back to the lines you drew in question 24. Pick one.
-

- 31.** Write down who you will talk to this week about doing it, and put a day on it. If you drew no lines, write down one person you will ask "what needs doing around here that nobody sees."
-

Bring this workbook back next week. This is the one I am most likely to ask about out loud.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 4: Three Men You Have Never Heard Of.

Read before class: 1 Corinthians 16:15-18, Philippians 2:25-30 and the whole of 3 John. It is short.

One thing to watch for: all three of those passages tell a congregation to do something about a worker. Find the command in each one. They are not the same command.

LESSON 4

THREE MEN YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD OF

1 CORINTHIANS 16:15-18 · PHILIPPIANS 2:25-30 · 3 JOHN 5-8

Reading before class: 1 Corinthians 16:15-18, Philippians 2:25-30 and the whole of 3 John. It is short.

We have spent three weeks on the member who works. This week we turn the chair around and look at the people watching him.

1. Name a person in this congregation who does something useful that you have never once said anything to them about. Do not write the name. Write the job.

2. In your own words, what does it mean to encourage somebody? We will come back to this.

THE FIRST MAN · STEPHANAS

3. Read 1 Corinthians 16:15. Paul says two things about the household of Stephanas. Write both.

4. Look at the second one carefully. Who did the devoting? Did somebody appoint them, or did they appoint themselves?

5. Read 1 Corinthians 16:17. Stephanas came with two other men. Name them, and write what Paul says they supplied.

6. That phrase is worth sitting with. If those men supplied what was lacking on the Corinthians' part, what does that tell you about the Corinthians?

7. Read 1 Corinthians 16:18. Write down what these men did to Paul's spirit and to theirs, and then write the command Paul attaches in the second half of the verse.

THE SECOND MAN · EPAPHRODITUS

8. Read Philippians 2:25. Paul stacks five titles on this man. Pull all five out.

9. The first three describe him to Paul. The last two describe him to the Philippians. What is the difference between those two groups?

10. Read Philippians 2:26. Epaphroditus was sick to the point of death. What was he distressed about? Read it twice, because it is not what you would expect.

11. Read Philippians 2:27. Paul says God had mercy, and then he says on whom. Who is the second person named, and what does that tell you about Paul?

12. Read Philippians 2:29. Write the two commands Paul gives the church about this man.

13. Read Philippians 2:30. Paul gives the reason. What did Epaphroditus do with his own life, and what was he completing?

THE THIRD MAN · GAIUS

14. Read 3 John 5. What is Gaius commended for, and who especially is he doing it for?

15. Read 3 John 6. Something Gaius did get reported. Where was it reported, and by whom?

16. Read 3 John 7. Why were these travelers out on the road, and what were they refusing to take?

17. Read 3 John 8. John gives a command and then gives a result. Write both.

The command: _____

The result: _____

18. Look hard at that result. Gaius never went anywhere. How does a man who stays home end up a fellow worker with the truth?

PUT THE THREE COMMANDS SIDE BY SIDE _____

I told you last week these are three different commands. Let us line them up.

19. Write the command from each passage in the space beside it.

1 Corinthians 16:16, 18 _____

Philippians 2:29 _____

3 John 8 _____

20. Now say what each one costs the congregation. They are not the same price.

21. Which of the three is the hardest for a congregation like ours to actually do? Why or why not?

- 22.** Notice something none of the three commands says. Not one of them says "feel grateful." What do all three require instead?
-

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

- 1.** Three different apostolic letters, three different congregations, three different commands about workers.
- 2.** Submit to them and acknowledge them. Receive them with joy and hold them in high regard. Support them.
- 3.** Every one of those is a thing you DO, and every one of them happens where other people can see it.
- 4.** Therefore encouragement in the New Testament is not a warm feeling about a worker. It is an action taken toward one.

WHAT THE THREE HAVE IN COMMON

- 23.** All three men were doing work that somebody else benefited from. Go back through and write who benefited in each case.

Stephanas: _____

Epaphroditus: _____

Gaius: _____

- 24.** Not one of these three is a famous name. Most Christians could not tell you a thing about any of them. So why did the Holy Spirit put their names in the book?
-

- 25.** In your opinion, what happens over twenty years to a congregation that never obeys these three commands?
-

WORD STUDY · RISKING HIS LIFE (PHILIPPIANS 2:30)

Start with this. The word appears once in the whole New Testament. Once. Paul reached for a word here that he never uses again anywhere, and he spent it on Epaphroditus.

What it means: to expose oneself to danger, to venture. Liddell et al. gives "venture, expose one-self," Swanson gives "risk," and the sense is to expose something to a chance of loss or damage.

Notice the voice. The verb is in the middle, which is the form that turns the action back on the one doing it. He did not risk something. He risked himself.

Its root is the ordinary Greek word for throwing or casting, the same root that stands behind the word for a parable. Why it matters here: the verse is not telling you Epaphroditus worked hard. It tells you he came close to death, and that he put his own life in the way of losing it, and that what he was finishing was a service the Philippians could not deliver themselves.

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. Lemma παραβολεύομαι, one occurrence in the New Testament, single sense to risk, "to expose to a chance of loss or damage"; aorist middle participle at Philippians 2:30; root √βαλλω "throw; cast; put." Lexicons consulted: Liddell et al.; Swanson. Full entries in Works Cited.

And note this: your English Bible already says "risking his life" and "came close to death." You do not need one word of Greek to know what it cost him.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Doesn't all this praising of people just feed a man's pride?"

That is a fair worry and it is worth answering rather than brushing off.

First, notice who is doing the commanding. Paul is not asking for this on his own behalf and neither is John. Both of them are telling a congregation to honor somebody else. That is a very different thing from a man arranging his own applause.

Second, notice what is actually being honored. Read the three passages again and see what gets named: devotion to ministry, supplying what was lacking, refreshing a spirit, risking a life, faithfulness toward strangers. The work gets honored, not the personality.

Third, the danger runs the other way too, and harder. A congregation that never says anything for fear of feeding pride will lose its workers to the quiet failure we studied in Lesson 2. Paul was not afraid of this. He named men out loud, in letters that got read to the whole assembly.

So the honest answer is that the command stands and the caution is real. Honor the work, say it plainly, and do not build a man a pedestal he has to live on.

FOR YOUR LIFE

- 26.** Look back at your answer to question 2. Would you change your definition now? What changed?
-
- 27.** Go back to the job you wrote in question 1. Which of the three commands does that person most need from this congregation?
-
- 28.** Think about somebody who has quietly supplied what was lacking on your part. Have you ever told them so?
-
- 29.** In your opinion, is it easier for us to thank a person privately or to acknowledge them where others can hear it? Which one did Paul command?
-

THIS WEEK

30. Write the name of one worker in this congregation. Just for you.

31. Write what you will say to that person this week, and where you will say it. If the command you picked in question 27 was acknowledgment, say it in front of somebody else.

Bring this workbook back next week. That is the end of Part One and we start on the tongue.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 5: A Bit, a Rudder and a Fire. This begins Part Two.

Read before class: James 3.

One thing to watch for: James does not give one picture of the tongue. He gives a string of them, one after another. Count how many you can find in James 3:1-12 before you get to class. Bring your number.

LESSON 5

A BIT, A RUDDER AND A FIRE

James 3:1-12; Proverbs 18:21

JAMES 3:1-12

Reading before class: James 3.

For four weeks we have been talking about what our hands do. Now we move about eighteen inches up.

1. I asked you to count the pictures in James 3:1-12 before class. Write your number here, and do not change it after you hear somebody else's.

My number: _____

2. In your own words, why would God give us a whole paragraph of pictures about the tongue instead of just a list of rules for it? We will come back to this.

FIRST, WHO IS BEING WARNED

3. Read James 3:1. Who does James start with, and what does he say they incur?

-
4. Read James 3:2. James says something about all of us and then something about one particular man. Write both.

About all of us: _____

About the man who does not stumble in speech: _____

5. Look at that second half again. James makes the tongue the test of something. The test of what?

TWO PICTURES THAT STEER

6. Read James 3:3. What goes in the horse's mouth, and what does it end up directing?

7. Read James 3:4. Write down three things James says about the ships, and then write what actually turns them.

8. Both pictures make the same point. Say it in one sentence.

9. Now look at the end of verse 4 for the part that is easy to run past. The rudder goes wherever whose inclination desires?

10. So a rudder is not the one deciding anything. What does that add to the picture that the bit alone does not give you?

THE PICTURE THAT TURNS ON YOU

11. Read James 3:5. James keeps the small-thing-big-result idea going but he changes what the small thing is doing. What is it doing now?

12. Read James 3:6 slowly. It is a heavy verse. Write down the four things James says the tongue is or does.

13. A bit and a rudder are held by somebody. Is a forest fire? What has James just done to his own illustration?

14. Read the last five words of verse 6. Where does James say that fire gets lit?

15. In your opinion, why does James put the steering pictures first and the fire picture second? What would be lost if he flipped them?

THE ONE THAT WILL NOT BE TAMED

16. Read James 3:7. Make a list of what mankind has managed to tame.

17. Read James 3:8. Write the sentence James puts against that list.

18. He gives the tongue two descriptions in that same verse. Write both, and note that neither one of them is about volume.

19. Here is a hard one and we will take it up in class. If no one can tame it, then what exactly is James asking us to do?

OUT OF THE SAME MOUTH

20. Read James 3:9. Two things come out of the same mouth. Name both.

21. Look at how James describes the men being cursed. What does he say about them, and why does he mention that here of all places?

22. Read James 3:10. Write out James's own verdict, word for word. It is short.

23. Notice he does not say these things ought not to happen so often. What does he actually say, and what does that do to the idea of a Christian who is mostly careful with his mouth?

TWO PICTURES ABOUT WHERE IT COMES FROM

24. Read James 3:11. What cannot a fountain do?

25. Read James 3:12. Write the two questions James asks and the one flat statement he ends on.

26. These last two pictures are not about control at all. What are they about? Look at what a spring and a tree both have that a bit and a rudder do not.

27. Put it together. If the mouth is a spring, then a man with a mouth problem has a problem where?

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

- 1.** The bit and the rudder say a small thing steers a large one.
- 2.** The fire says the same small thing destroys, and nobody is holding it.
- 3.** The beast says you cannot tame it by trying harder.
- 4.** The spring and the tree say what comes out tells you what is down in there.
- 5.** Therefore this chapter is not finally about the tongue at all. It is about the man the tongue belongs to.

DRAW THEM

- 28.** In the space below, draw all six pictures. They can be terrible drawings. Under each one write the verse number and, in three words or less, what it teaches.

THE PROVERB UNDERNEATH ALL OF IT

- 29.** Read Proverbs 18:21. What two things does Solomon say are in the power of the tongue?

- 30.** Note that he does not say the tongue has power to hurt or help. He uses bigger words than that. Do you think he is exaggerating? Give your reasons.

WORD STUDY · BRIDLE (JAMES 3:2) AND BIT (JAMES 3:3)

These two words are not merely related. One of them contains the other.

Verse 2 calls the man who does not stumble in speech able to bridle the whole body. That verb is a compound word, and Liddell et al., the standard dictionary of ancient Greek, gives "guide with, as with bit and bridle." Strong glosses it "bit-leader." And Swanson puts the plain meaning on it: "exercise self-control."

Verse 3 then puts bits into horses' mouths. That noun is the bit half of the verb from verse 2, now standing on its own.

And here is the part worth seeing. The dictionary definition of the verse 2 verb says it means to curb something, "conceived of as placing a bridle on something (like a horse) so as to control it." So the horse is not an illustration James went hunting for. It was already inside the word he used one sentence earlier.

And what a bit actually is: a piece of metal, perhaps iron, held in a horse's mouth by the reins and used to steer the animal while a man rides it.

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. James 3:2, χαλιναγωγέω, "bridle; hold in check," sense to curb, "conceived of as placing a bridle on something (like a horse) so as to control it"; James 3:3, χαλινός, "bit; bridle." Lexicons consulted: Liddell et al.; Swanson; Strong. Full entries in Works Cited.

And note this: you can see the whole point in English without any of that. Bridle in verse 2, bits in verse 3, one sentence apart.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"If verse 8 says no one can tame the tongue, then why is this chapter here? Am I being commanded to do something impossible?"

That is the right question to ask of this chapter and I would rather a person ask it than sit there confused. Notice exactly what verse 8 says and what it does not. It says no one can tame it. It is a statement about what a man can accomplish by his own effort, and it is right after seven verses about what mankind HAS tamed. James has been building that contrast on purpose. The verse is aimed at your confidence, not at your responsibility.

Now notice where James does not stop. He does not end the chapter at verse 12. Read on into verses 13 through 18 this week and see what he introduces the moment the tongue has been declared untamable. It is not a technique.

And remember what James already told this same congregation back in chapter 1: that God gives wisdom generously to the man who asks, and that the word implanted is able to save souls.

So the honest answer is that verse 8 kills one hope in order to point you at a better one. The man who reads verse 8 and concludes he is off the hook has read one verse and quit. The man who reads it and quits trying in his own strength has read it right.

FOR YOUR LIFE

31. Look back at your answer to question 2. Would you change it now? What changed?

32. Verse 6 says the tongue defiles the entire body. Think of a time when something you said changed the way you felt about yourself for the rest of the day. Which came first, the feeling or the words?

33. Verse 9 puts blessing and cursing in the same mouth. Be honest. How many hours pass between the two in your week?

- 34.** In your opinion, which is more common among us: people who say cruel things, or people who say true things cruelly?
-

THIS WEEK

- 35.** Verse 4 says the rudder goes where the pilot's inclination desires. Name one thing you want badly enough right now that it is steering how you talk.
-

- 36.** Write down one conversation you are likely to have this week where that will show up, and what you will do differently.
-

Bring this workbook back next week. We are going to spend all of next Sunday on one word.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 6: On the Receiving End.

Read before class: Colossians 4 and Ephesians 4.

One thing to watch for: Ephesians 4:29 tells you to stop saying one kind of thing and start saying another. Find the standard Paul gives for the second kind. It is not "be positive." It is a great deal more demanding than that.

LESSON 6

ON THE RECEIVING END

Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 4:6; Proverbs 15:1

EPHESIANS 4:29 · COLOSSIANS 4:6

Reading before class: Colossians 4 and Ephesians 4.

Last week we studied the tongue. This week we are going to stand somewhere else and watch it work: in the ear of the person it is aimed at.

1. Think of something somebody said to you years ago that you still remember. Do not write what it was. Write how long ago it was.
years ago.
 2. In your own words, what makes a word a good word? We will come back to this at the end, so answer it before you read any further.
-

THE STANDARD I SENT YOU TO FIND

3. Read Ephesians 4:29. Paul forbids one kind of word and commands another. Write the forbidden kind.

4. Now write out the whole second half of the verse, the part describing what may come out instead. Every word of it.

5. There are three tests in that second half, not one. Pull them apart.
Test one, what it is good for:
Test two, when it fits:
Test three, what it does to the hearer:

6. Look at test two. What does "the need of the moment" do to the idea that there is a list of good things to say?
-

7. Now look at test three, and look at it hard. Paul says the word gives grace to those who hear. So where does the measuring happen? In the mouth or in the ear?
-

8. In your opinion, could a sentence be true, and kindly meant, and still fail this verse? Give your reasons.
-

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. Paul does not say be positive and he does not say be nice.
2. He gives three tests: it builds, it fits this moment, and it is gracious.
3. The third test is applied at the other end of the conversation.
4. Therefore a man cannot grade his own speech by what he meant. He has to look at where it affects him personally when he truly hears it.

WHAT KIND OF WORD IS FORBIDDEN

9. Go back to the word Paul forbids in Ephesians 4:29. That same Greek word shows up in Matthew 7:17-18, and it is the word describing the tree. Read those two verses and write down what kind of tree it is.
-

10. Here is something your English Bible hides. In Matthew 7:17-18 the words "bad tree" and "bad fruit" use two different Greek words. The tree word is the one from Ephesians 4:29. The fruit word is a different one entirely. What might that tell you about leaning on an English word to carry an argument?
-

11. Now put all that back into Ephesians 4:29. Paul is not banning crude words only. What is he banning?

12. Read Ephesians 4:31. Paul lists six things to put away. Write them.

13. How many of those six are things that happen mostly with the mouth?

SEASONED WITH SALT

14. Read Colossians 4:6. Write the two things Paul says our speech is to be.

15. Find the word in that verse that tells you how often. What is it, and what does it rule out?

16. Salt does two things to food: it preserves it and it makes it taste like something. Which one do you think Paul has in mind here, or does he mean both? Give your reasons.

17. Read the last part of Colossians 4:6. Paul attaches a purpose. Write it out.

18. Notice the last two words of that verse. Paul does not say respond to each SITUATION. What does he say, and what does that require of you before you open your mouth?

THE ANSWER THAT TURNS IT

19. Read Proverbs 15:1. Write the two halves.

20. Here is what most people miss in that proverb. Solomon is not talking about the man who started it. Look at the word answer. Who is the gentle one in that verse, and what has just happened to him?

21. So Proverbs 15:1 hands the outcome of an argument to which of the two people in it?

22. In your opinion, why is the gentle answer so hard? It costs nothing and it works. Why don't we give it?

THE REWRITE DRILL

Each sentence below is something a Christian might actually say. None of them is a lie. Every one of them fails Ephesians 4:29. Rewrite each one so it passes all three tests, and be ready to read yours out loud.

23. "Well, I hate to say I told you so."

24. "I'm just being honest."

25. "You always do this."

26. "Must be nice."

27. "I'm not trying to be ugly, but somebody needs to say it."

28. Now look back over your five rewrites. What did you have to add to nearly every one of them? There is a pattern and I want you to find it.

WORD STUDY · UNWHOLESOME

The word: sapos, and it is not the word for coarse or vulgar. Its root means decay or rot.

Its one meaning in the New Testament. This word has a single sense across all eight of its occurrences: unsound, that is, "not in good condition (damaged or decayed); hence unsound and useless."

Read that definition again, because it is the whole lesson. Not indecent. Not shocking. Unsound and useless.

Where else it appears: it is the word for the bad tree in Matthew 7:17-18 and Matthew 12:33. A tree that has gone unsound.

Now something your English Bible hides. In Matthew 7:17-18 the phrase "bad tree" and the phrase "bad fruit" use two different Greek words. The tree is sapos, the rotten one. The fruit is a different word altogether, one that means having undesirable qualities. Your English gives you "bad" twice and the Greek never repeats itself. That is the same caution we met in Lesson 2, running the other direction: there, one Greek word wore two English coats; here, two Greek words wear one.

Why it matters here: it widens Paul's command a long way past cursing. A rotten word can be perfectly polite. It can be grammatically clean and technically true and still be exactly what Paul is throwing out, because the test is not whether it is crude. The test is whether it is sound and useful.

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. Lemma σαπρός, 8 occurrences, root √σηπω "decay; rot," single sense unsound 8 of 8; predicative adjective at Ephesians 4:29, attributive at Matthew 7:17-18. The fruit word at Matthew 7:17-18 is πονηρός, root √πονος "pain; affliction," sense bad. Lexicons consulted: Kittel et al.; Strong. Full entries in Works Cited.

And note this: you can see the point in English. Nobody thinks a rotten tree is a vulgar tree.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Does this mean I can never say a hard thing? Somebody has to tell people the truth."

Somebody does, and this passage is not against it.

Four verses earlier, in Ephesians 4:25, the same paragraph commands us to speak truth with our neighbor. Paul is not telling you to go quiet. And a few verses before that, in Ephesians 4:15, he has already given the pattern: truth spoken in love. The hard word is not the forbidden word.

Read verse 29 again and notice what it actually screens for. It does not ask whether the sentence is pleasant. It asks whether it builds, whether it fits this moment and whether it is gracious on the person hearing it. A hard truth can pass all three. A great deal of what we call honesty passes none of them.

So here is the test I would put on it. When you are about to say a hard thing, ask what you want to happen next. If you want the person built up, verse 29 is on your side and it will help you find the words. If what you want is to be right out loud, that is a different errand and the verse is not going to bless it.

FOR YOUR LIFE

- 29.** Look back at your answer to question 2. Would you change your definition now? What changed?
-
- 30.** Go back to question 1. Somebody said a thing to you years ago and you are still carrying it. Now think about whether anybody is carrying something you said.
-
- 31.** Colossians 4:6 says respond to each person. Name one person in your life who needs a different kind of word from you than everybody else does.
-
- 32.** In your opinion, which fails more often around here: the forbidden word getting said, or the good word never getting said at all?
-

THIS WEEK

33. Name one conversation coming this week where you already know the harsh word will be sitting on your tongue.

34. Write the gentle answer now, before you are in it. Proverbs 15:1 works better when it is not improvised.

Bring this workbook back next week. Next Sunday is the hardest lesson in this quarter and I want you here for it.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 7: Where There Is No Wood.

Read before class: Proverbs 26 and Philippians 2.

One thing to watch for: Proverbs 26:20 explains exactly how gossip dies. Notice that it does not say the fire gets put out. Read the verse and see what it actually says happens.

LESSON 7

WHERE THERE IS NO WOOD

Proverbs 26:20-22; Proverbs 16:28; 1 Timothy 5:13; Philippians 2:14-16

PROVERBS 26:20-22 · PROVERBS 16:28

Reading before class: Proverbs 26 and Philippians 2.

I want to say at the front that this is the hardest lesson in the quarter, and it is hard for a reason that will not be obvious for another twenty minutes. Work it honestly.

1. Write your own definition of gossip. Whatever you have always understood it to be. Do not look anything up and do not soften it. We are coming back to this and it matters that you write what you actually think.

2. In your opinion, what percentage of the harmful talk in a congregation comes from people who would say they were gossiping?
percent.

HOW A FIRE DIES

3. Read Proverbs 26:20. Write out both halves.

4. I told you last week to notice what the verse does NOT say. It does not say somebody puts the fire out. What does it say happens instead?

5. So according to Solomon, what does a fire need in order to keep going?

6. Now put the two halves of the verse together. If the wood is what keeps a fire alive, then in the second half, who or what is the wood?
-

7. Nobody in that proverb is a firefighter. What does that say about where the responsibility falls?
-

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. Solomon does not tell anybody to put the fire out.
2. He says a fire without fuel goes out on its own.
3. The fuel is a person.
4. Therefore the way contention ends in a congregation is that somebody stops handing it wood.

WHY IT TASTES SO GOOD

8. Read Proverbs 26:22. What does Solomon compare the whisperer's words to?
-

9. That is not a picture of something bitter or ugly. It is a picture of something you WANT. Why would Solomon describe it that way instead of making it sound repulsive?
-

10. Read the second half of verse 22. Where do those words end up?
-

11. In your own words, what is Solomon saying happens to information you receive that way? Can you give it back?
-

12. Read Proverbs 26:21. What does the contentious man do, and what is he compared to?
-

WHAT IT ACTUALLY DOES

13. Read Proverbs 16:28. Write the two things named in that verse.

14. Look at the second half. Who exactly gets separated? Solomon does not say people in general.

15. Why would the closest friendships be the ones that come apart? Think about what has to be true for a report to do that kind of damage.

16. Now go back through Proverbs 26:20-22 and 16:28 with one question in mind, and answer it from the text only. Does any one of those verses say a single word about whether the report was true?

TRACE THE CHAIN

Something gets said about a member of this congregation. It reaches you. You tell one person.

17. Draw the chain in the space below. Put the person the report is ABOUT at the far right. Put whoever started it at the far left. Put yourself where you actually are.

→ → → →

18. How many links are between you and the person who started it?

19. How many links are between you and the person it is about?

20. Now cross yourself out of the chain. What happens to everything to the right of where you were standing?

- 21.** Most of us have never started one of these in our lives. Does Proverbs 26:20 have anything to say to a man who only ever stood in the middle?

WHERE IT GETS ITS START

- 22.** Read 1 Timothy 5:13. Paul names one condition first and then names what grows out of it. Write the condition.

- 23.** Write the two things Paul says they become, and then the phrase he uses for what they talk about.

- 24.** Notice the verb Paul uses at the front of that verse. He says they LEARN to be idle. What does that word do to the idea that some people are just naturally talkers?

- 25.** In your opinion, why would idleness and gossip run together? What does one supply the other?

THE SAME MAN, IN GREEK

The word study box explains why this is not a change of subject. Solomon's whisperer is defined as a grumbler, and here is Paul on grumbling.

- 26.** Read Philippians 2:14. Write the command and the two things forbidden.

- 27.** That is a large command. How many things does "all things" leave out?

28. Read Philippians 2:15. Paul attaches a purpose. What are we supposed to prove ourselves to be, and where?

WORD STUDY · WHISPERER

The word: the Hebrew word your Bible renders "whisperer" in Proverbs 26:20 and 26:22 comes off a root meaning to complain or grumble, and the root also carries the sense of slander.

Its definition, and read it slowly: to make complaining remarks or noises under one's breath.

So the volume really is part of the word. This is not a shouter. The lexicons give "murmur, whisper," "grumble, rebel, murmur," and older ones simply "to murmur, to repine." Solomon did not pick a word for a man who argues loudly. He picked a word for a man who keeps his voice down.

Now here is what that does to this lesson. Later in this study we go to Philippians 2:14, where Paul says to do all things without grumbling. That is not a second, related subject. The Hebrew word for the man who feeds the fire in Proverbs 26:20 is defined as a grumbler. Two languages, a thousand years apart, describing the same man under his breath.

(Careful with that, and here is the limit: Paul wrote Greek and Solomon wrote Hebrew, so these are not the same word. They are the same behavior, named twice.)

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. Proverbs 26:20, נָגַח, a Nif'al participle on the root נָגַח, "complain, grumble; appear sullen, slander," sense to grumble, "to make complaining remarks or noises under one's breath." Lexicons consulted: Brown et al.; Gesenius and Tregelles; Strong. Full entries in Works Cited.

And note this: the point survives without a word of Hebrew. Your English Bible says whisperer, and that already tells you how loudly this man talks.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"But what if what I said was true?"

This is the question the whole lesson is built to reach, and I want to answer it from the passages we just worked rather than from anybody's opinion, mine included.

Go back to question 16. Read Proverbs 26:20, 26:21, 26:22 and 16:28 again and look for the word lie. Look for false. Look for slander in the sense of something made up. In the verses about the whisperer, it is not there. Solomon describes those words three ways: by what they do (kindle strife, separate intimate friends), by how they are received (dainty morsels, going down into the innermost parts) and by how they are delivered (whispered). He never once grades them for accuracy.

Now ask what that means. If a true report separates two intimate friends, the friends are just as separated. If a true report kindles strife, the strife burns the same. The fire in verse 20 does not check the wood for accuracy before it burns.

So truth is not the test this passage gives you. That does not make truth unimportant and it certainly does not make lying acceptable, which is condemned everywhere. It means truth is not by itself a defense, and most of us have used it as one.

Here is the harder half. There are times a true thing must be said, and said to somebody. A sin that needs confronting, a danger somebody needs warned about, a matter the elders have to know. Scripture provides for every one of those and none of them is whispered down a chain. The difference is not the truth of it. The difference is who you are telling and what you want to happen.

FOR YOUR LIFE

- 29.** Look back at your definition in question 1. Did your definition have anything in it about whether the report was true? If it did, what would you change now?

- 30.** Think of the last time you passed something along about somebody in this congregation. Who did it help?

31. Proverbs 26:22 says those words go down into the innermost parts. Is there somebody you think of differently today because of something you were told years ago and never checked?

32. In your opinion, what would actually change around here if every member simply stopped being the middle link? Not stopped starting. Stopped passing.

THIS WEEK

33. Write down what you will say the next time somebody begins one of these with you. Write the actual words. You will need them sooner than you think and it is easier to have them ready.

34. Is there somebody you owe a conversation to because you were a link in a chain about them? You do not have to write the name.

Bring this workbook back next week. After a lesson like this one we need the one that is coming.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 8: A Word for the Weary.

Read before class: Proverbs 12, Proverbs 16 and Isaiah 50:4.

One thing to watch for: in Isaiah 50:4 the speaker says God gave him a tongue for a particular job, and then he says God does something to him every single morning. Find out what gets awakened, and notice it is not his mouth.

LESSON 8

A WORD FOR THE WEARY

Proverbs 12:18; Proverbs 12:25; Proverbs 16:24; Isaiah 50:4

ISAIAH 50:4 · PROVERBS 12:18, 25 · PROVERBS 16:24

Reading before class: Proverbs 12, Proverbs 16 and Isaiah 50:4.

Last week we spent an hour on what a word can tear down. This is the other side of it, and I want you to know going in that this lesson ends with you writing something.

1. Think of the single most encouraging thing anybody has ever said to you. Write down how long it took them to say it.

About seconds.

2. In your own words, what makes a person qualified to encourage somebody else? We will come back to this, and I expect your answer to change.
-

A SWORD AND A MEDICINE

3. Read Proverbs 12:18. Solomon puts two kinds of speaker side by side. Describe each one.

4. Look at what the first man's words are compared to. Note that a sword thrust is quick. What does that tell you about how much time it takes to do this kind of damage?

5. Now look at the second half. Solomon says the tongue of the wise brings something. What is it, and what does that word assume about the person listening?

6. In your opinion, why does Solomon call the second man wise instead of calling him kind?
-

THE WEIGHT AND WHAT LIFTS IT

7. Read Proverbs 12:25. Write the two halves.

8. Notice the picture in the first half. Anxiety does something physical to a man's heart. What is it?

9. Now look at what Solomon puts against that weight. It is not a solution to the problem and it is not money and it is not advice. What is it?

10. Think about how small that is compared to what it is lifting. Why would God arrange things so that something that costs nothing can move something that heavy?

THE HONEYCOMB

11. Read Proverbs 16:24. What are pleasant words compared to, and what two things do they do?

12. Solomon says sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. That is a strange pairing. What is he claiming reaches how far?

13. Put Proverbs 12:18, 12:25 and 16:24 side by side. All three make the same claim about what right words do. Say it in one sentence.

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. A rash word works like a sword and it takes no time at all.
2. A good word lifts a weight that anxiety put on a man's heart.
3. Pleasant words reach past the soul and into the bones.
4. Therefore Scripture treats words as medicine, not as manners.

THE EAR THAT GETS WOKEN UP

Now we come to the verse this lesson is built on, and it is going to take us somewhere you may not expect.

14. Read Isaiah 50:4. The speaker says God gave Him a tongue. What kind of tongue does He call it?

15. God gave that tongue for a purpose. Write the purpose out exactly as the verse states it.

16. Look closely at that purpose. It does not say to correct the weary one, or to advise him, or to fix his situation. What does it say?

17. Now the second half of the verse. I told you last week that God does something every morning. What does He awaken?

18. Read that again. The man whose job is to sustain the weary with a word has his EAR woken up every morning, not his mouth. Why would God do it in that order?

19. Go back to your answer to question 2. Does Isaiah 50:4 agree with you about what qualifies a person to encourage somebody?

- 20.** In your own words, what is a "tongue of disciples"? Notice that a disciple is by definition a person who is being taught.
-

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

- 1.** The tongue that sustains the weary is a given tongue, not a natural gift.
- 2.** Its stated job is to sustain, and your English Bible chose that word rather than save or fix.
- 3.** The ear gets awakened first and it gets awakened daily.
- 4.** Therefore the qualification for encouraging people is not that you are good with words. It is that you have been listening.

WHO IS TALKING IN ISAIAH 50

- 21.** Read Isaiah 50:4-6 together. Keep going past verse 4 into verses 5 and 6 and write down what happens to this speaker.
-

- 22.** Your Bible probably capitalizes the pronouns in verse 4. Who do you believe is speaking here, and what in verses 5 and 6 makes you say so?
-

- 23.** If that is who is speaking, then the pattern in verse 4 is not merely good advice. Whose habit are we being shown?
-

WRITE THE NOTE

This is the part I told you about. Nobody leaves today without doing it.

- 24.** Name one person you know who is weary right now. Not in crisis. Weary.
-

- 25.** Before you write anything to them, answer this: what do you actually know about what they are carrying? If the answer is very little, that is the assignment underneath the assignment.

- 26.** Now write the note. Not a verse by itself. Not "praying for you." Say the specific true thing you have noticed about them.

- 27.** Read what you wrote and check it against Ephesians 4:29 from two weeks ago. Does it build, does it fit this moment, and will it be gracious?

WORD STUDY · SUSTAIN THE WEARY ONE (ISAIAH 50:4)

Two words here, and they pull in opposite directions. Take the easy one first.

"The weary one" is a noun, not an adjective, and its sense is exactly that: "a weary one, a person who is weary." It appears four times in the whole Hebrew Bible. Look at the company it keeps. Judges 8:15, Gideon asking a town why they would not give bread to "your men who are weary." 2 Samuel 16:2, Ziba bringing wine "for whoever is faint in the wilderness to drink." Both are men still on the march, still walking, needing bread and something to drink to keep walking. Not men who collapsed and had to be carried.

Now "sustain," and this one is genuinely difficult. I would rather you knew than not.

That verb appears twelve times in the Hebrew Bible, and eleven of them are bad. Its ordinary meaning is to bend, to twist, to pervert. It is the word in Job 8:3, "Does God pervert justice?" It is Amos 8:5, to cheat with dishonest scales. Psalm 119:78, the arrogant who subvert with a lie. Psalm 146:9, God thwarts the way of the wicked.

Isaiah 50:4 is the one exception out of twelve, the single place the word is read as helping or being of service. So the lexicons split, and so do the translations. Brown-Driver-Briggs gives only "be bent, crooked." Gesenius gives "to bend, to curve, to pervert." Strong gives "hasten; succor; speak in season." Your NASB reads "sustain the weary one with a word." The King James reads "speak a word in season to him that is weary." Same Hebrew, two very different English sentences, and neither translator was careless. Here is why I am telling you instead of picking one. Look at what both readings have in common. Either way, a word goes to a tired man from somebody who noticed he was tired. Whether the word holds him up or arrives at the right moment, the lesson is the same, and it does not depend on which reading wins. (And if the King James has it, notice that "in season" is the same idea we met in Ephesians 4:29 two weeks ago: a word fitted to the need of the moment.)

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. יָעֵץ, noun, sense weary one, four occurrences. תוּע, Qal infinitive construct, lemma glossed "bend; falsify; suppress," root "to bend; to falsify; to suppress," twelve occurrences, of which the sense to help (assist) is tagged 1 of 12 and stands at Isaiah 50:4; the remaining senses run to wrong, to pervert, to be bent, to stoop. Lexicons consulted: Brown et al.; Gesenius and Tregelles; Strong. Full entries in Works Cited. And note this, because it's the main point of this lesson. Whichever reading you take, Isaiah's man is not sent to rescue anybody. He is sent to hand a tired man something so he can keep going.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Isn't this just flattery with a Bible verse on it? And what about those of us who are not good with words?"

Two questions there and they deserve separate answers.

On flattery. Flattery says a thing that is not true in order to get something. Every passage we worked today requires the opposite. Proverbs 12:18 puts the healing tongue in the mouth of a WISE man, not an agreeable one. Ephesians 4:29, which we studied two weeks ago, requires a word to fit the need of the moment, and a compliment that does not fit the moment fails that test. Flattery is easy and it is generic. What Isaiah describes is specific, and specific is expensive, because it requires you to have paid attention.

On not being good with words. Read Isaiah 50:4 one more time and notice that the speaker does not claim to be good with words either. He says the tongue was GIVEN to him, and then he tells you the daily habit that stands behind it: his ear gets opened every morning.

So the answer to "I am not good with words" is not a class in words. Proverbs 12:25 says a good word makes a heavy heart glad, and it does not say an eloquent word. The people in this congregation who are best at this are not the best talkers. They are the ones who know what is going on with you.

FOR YOUR LIFE

28. Look back at your answer to question 2. Has it changed? Write what you would say now.

29. Go back to question 1. Somebody spent a few seconds on you years ago and you still have it. What does that tell you about the return on this kind of investment?

30. In your opinion, why do we hold back the good word so much more often than the harsh one? Both take about the same amount of breath.

- 31.** Isaiah's speaker gets his ear opened every morning. What would it take for that to be true of you, practically, this week?
-

THIS WEEK

- 32.** Deliver the note you wrote at question 26. Write down the day you will give it, and how.
-

- 33.** Write down one person you will simply ask a question of this week, with no intention of saying anything back. Isaiah's man listened first.
-

Bring this workbook back next week. That closes Part Two. Part Three is five lessons long and it is the hardest ground in the quarter.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 9: What Grows Underground. This begins Part Three.

Read before class: Hebrews 12 and Ephesians 4.

One thing to watch for: Hebrews 12:15 warns about a root. Notice how many people the writer says get affected by it, and compare that number to how many the root belongs to.

LESSON 9

WHAT GROWS UNDERGROUND

Hebrews 12:14-15; Ephesians 4:31

HEBREWS 12:14-15 • EPHESIANS 4:31

Reading before class: Hebrews 12 and Ephesians 4.

We begin five weeks on forgiveness. And we are not going to start with forgiving. We are going to start with what is already growing in a person who has not.

1. Think of a plant that came up in your yard where you did not put one. How long was it there before you saw it?

-
2. In your own words, what is bitterness? Not what causes it. What it IS. We will come back to this.
-

THE THING NOBODY CAN SEE YET

3. Read Hebrews 12:15. The writer warns about a root. What kind of root is it, and what does he say it does when it springs up?

-
4. A root is underground. How long does a root exist before anybody knows it is there?
-

5. Notice the phrase "springing up." That is not the moment the root began. What is it the moment of?
-

6. Read Hebrews 12:14, the verse right before it. What two things are we told to pursue?
-

7. So the warning about the root is attached to a command about peace. What does that tell you about what a root of bitterness does to a congregation's peace?
-

DO THE ARITHMETIC

I told you last week to count something in this verse. Let us do it now.

8. Read Hebrews 12:15 again. How many roots does the writer mention?
-

9. How many people does he say get defiled by it?
-

10. Put those two numbers side by side and say what you see.
-

11. Most of us think of bitterness as a private matter, something a man carries around inside himself and nobody else's business. Does Hebrews 12:15 permit that view?
-

12. Read the first part of verse 15 again, the opening command. Who is it addressed to, and whose job does that make this?
-

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. One root. Many defiled.
2. The root is underground before anybody sees a thing.
3. The command in front of the warning is a command about pursuing peace.
4. Therefore bitterness is never a private sin, no matter how privately it is carried.

READ THE LIST IN ORDER

13. Read Ephesians 4:31. Paul lists six things to put away. Write them down in the order Paul wrote them.

1. _____ **2.** _____ **3.** _____

4. _____ **5.** _____ **6.** _____

14. Which one is first?

15. Now look at what comes after it. Go down that list and mark which ones happen inside a man and which ones come out where other people can see or hear them.

16. You studied the fifth item on that list two weeks ago. Look back at Lesson 7 for a moment. If slander is fifth on this list and bitterness is first, what is Paul telling you about where gossip comes from?

17. In your opinion, is Paul's order accidental, or is he showing you a sequence? Give your reasons.

DRAW IT

18. Draw a horizontal line across the middle of the space below. That is ground level.



19. Below the line, write the things from Ephesians 4:31 that nobody can see.
20. Above the line, write the ones everybody can.
21. Now look at your drawing. Which half does a congregation usually try to deal with, and which half is the problem?
-

WHERE THE PHRASE COMES FROM

22. Read Deuteronomy 29:18. Write down exactly what kind of root Moses warns about. Every word of it.
-
23. Now put that beside Hebrews 12:15 and compare the two roots word for word. They are not the same words, are they? Write down what is different.
-
24. So the writer of Hebrews is not quoting Moses. He is reaching back to him. What did he keep? Look for the part that carried over.
-
25. Here is a help. Wormwood is a bitter plant. Knowing that, what has Hebrews done with Moses' wording?
-
26. In Deuteronomy, what has happened in a person's heart before that root shows up?
-
27. Now read one verse further, Deuteronomy 29:19. Moses tells you what the man with the root says to himself while the warning is being read out loud to him. Write it down.
-
28. He hears the warning and decides he is fine. So a root is hidden from the congregation because it is underground. What does verse 19 say hides it from the man himself?
-

29. Moses is warning a whole nation and Hebrews is warning a congregation. What do those two situations have in common?
-

WORD STUDY · ROOT OF BITTERNESS (HEBREWS 12:15)

First, what this is not. Hebrews 12:15 is often described as quoting Deuteronomy 29:18. It does not quote it. Set the two side by side in your own Bible and you can see it:

Deuteronomy 29:18 warns of "a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood."

Hebrews 12:15 warns of "no root of bitterness springing up."

Different words. Hebrews also adds "springing up," which is not in the Deuteronomy sentence at all. So what is it? An echo. The writer of Hebrews is reaching back to a warning every Jewish reader knew and picking it up in his own words rather than copying it. That is a normal thing for a New Testament writer to do and it is worth learning to spot, because a great deal gets built on top of "quotations" that are really allusions. Here is what carried over. The word root, the shape of the warning about something growing among a people, and the bitterness. Notice how that last one travels: wormwood is a bitter plant. Moses names the plant. Hebrews names what the plant tastes like. Same idea, compressed into one word.

Why it matters here: the writer is not reaching for a garden illustration of his own. He is taking a warning Moses gave to an entire nation and putting it on a congregation. The echo is the argument.

And note this: you can check every word of the above yourself in two minutes, in English, with two ribbons in your Bible. You should.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"What if I have a right to be bitter? What was done to me was real."

That is not a dodge and I am not going to treat it like one. Somebody in this room is asking it honestly. Start with what Scripture does not say. Nowhere in Hebrews 12 or Ephesians 4 does God say the wrong was not real, or that it was small, or that you misunderstood it. He never asks you to pretend. Whoever taught that forgiving means calling the injury nothing was not teaching you the Bible.

Now notice what the passages are actually about. Hebrews 12:15 is not a verdict on whether you were wronged. It is a warning about what is growing in the ground afterward, and about how many other people it reaches. Paul's list in Ephesians 4:31 does not begin with a discussion of who started it either. Both texts are about what happens next, and they are addressed to you because you are the only person who can

do anything about your own ground.

And one more thing, plainly. Bitterness is a poor guard. It does not protect a person from being hurt again and it does not settle any account. What it does is defile many, according to verse 15, and most of those many had nothing to do with the original wrong.

If what you are carrying is bigger than a workbook page, come find me. I said that in the Forward and I meant it, and it belongs here more than anywhere else in this book.

FOR YOUR LIFE

- 30.** Look back at your answer to question 2. Would you define bitterness differently now? What changed?

-
- 31.** Read Genesis 37:4. Joseph's brothers hated him, and the verse says they could not speak to him on friendly terms. Not would not. Could not. What had the grudge taken away from them?
-

32. Look back at Part Two of this book, the four weeks we spent on the tongue. If a man's speech has gone sour, what does Genesis 37:4 suggest you are actually looking at?

33. Hebrews 12:15 says many are defiled. Name the people who would be affected if a root were growing in you. Not names. Categories: who is close enough to catch it?

34. In your opinion, how does a person tell the difference between a wound that is healing slowly and a root that is growing? Is there a way to know?

35. Be honest here and nobody is reading it. Is there a name you cannot say without your chest changing?

THIS WEEK

36. Verse 15 says see to it. That is aimed at all of us about each other. Name one person you are close enough to that you would notice.

37. Write one thing you will do this week about your own ground. If question 35 turned up a name, this is about that. If it did not, write down how you will keep it that way.

Bring this workbook back next week. Next Sunday we are going to do arithmetic in class, so bring something to write with.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 10: Ten Thousand Talents.

Read before class: Matthew 18:21-35 and Luke 17:3-4.

One thing to watch for: Jesus puts two amounts of money in this parable. Find both numbers before you get to class and write them down. We are going to compare them out loud.

LESSON 10

TEN THOUSAND TALENTS

Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 17:3-4

MATTHEW 18:21-35

Reading before class: Matthew 18:21-35 and Luke 17:3-4.

Last week we looked at what grows in the ground of a man who has not forgiven. This week the Lord tells a story about one, and He puts numbers in it on purpose.

- 1.** I told you to find two amounts of money before class. Write both here.

The first amount: _____ The second amount: _____

- 2.** In your own words, what does it mean to forgive somebody? Write it before you read the parable again. We will come back to it.

THE QUESTION THAT STARTED IT

- 3.** Read Matthew 18:21. What does Peter ask, and what number does he propose?

- 4.** Peter is not being stingy. He is offering more than he was likely taught. What does his question assume there is?

- 5.** Read Matthew 18:22. Write the Lord's answer.

- 6.** In your opinion, is Jesus giving Peter a bigger number to count to, or is He doing something else with the counting itself?

THE FIRST DEBT

7. Read Matthew 18:23-24. What is the king doing, and how much does the first slave owe?

8. Read Matthew 18:25. What was the sentence, and who else was included in it?

-
9. Read Matthew 18:26. Write out exactly what the slave asks for.

-
10. Look hard at his request. He does not ask to be forgiven. What does he ask for, and what does that tell you about what he still believed about himself?

-
11. Read Matthew 18:27. The king does three things. Write all three, and note which one the slave never asked for.

NOW DO THE ARITHMETIC

Work these out. We are going to compare answers in class.

12. The NASB translators note that a denarius was a day's wages, and you can see it in the text yourself: read Matthew 20:2, where a landowner agrees with laborers on a denarius for the day. So one hundred denarii is about how long a man works?
days, which is about months.

13. Now the first debt. The NASB translators put a note on this verse: one talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages for a laborer. So ten thousand talents is more than how many years of wages?
More than years.

14. A man might work fifty years in his whole life. So how many working lifetimes is that debt?
lifetimes.

- 15.** Now write both debts in one sentence, side by side, in your own words. Take your time with it.
-

- 16.** Look at your answer to question 15 and then read the slave's promise in verse 26 again. Was he telling the truth?
-

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

- 1.** The second debt is real. A hundred days of work is real money to a working man.
- 2.** The first debt is not merely larger. It is unpayable, and Jesus chose numbers that make that obvious.
- 3.** The slave asked for time and received release.
- 4.** Therefore the man in this parable did not understand what had happened to him, and that is the whole problem.

THE SECOND DEBT

- 17.** Read Matthew 18:28. What does the forgiven slave do the moment he goes out? Use the parable's own verbs.
-

- 18.** Read Matthew 18:29 and write out what the fellow slave says.
-

- 19.** Put verse 29 beside verse 26. How different are those two sentences?
-

- 20.** Now think about it. One of those two men could actually have kept that promise. Which one, and why does that make his treatment worse?
-

- 21.** Read Matthew 18:30. What does he do instead?
-

WHO ELSE WAS WATCHING

22. Read Matthew 18:31. Somebody else sees this. Who, and what does the text say they felt?

23. That is a strong phrase for people who were not involved in the debt at all. Go back to Lesson 9 and Hebrews 12:15. What did we say about how many people an unforgiving heart reaches?

24. What do those slaves do about it, and who do they take it to?

HOW IT ENDS

25. Read Matthew 18:32-33. The king asks one question. Write it out, and underline the three words at the end of it.

26. Read Matthew 18:34. What is the sentence, and how long does it run? Look back at your answer to question 13 before you say how long.

27. Read Matthew 18:35. Jesus applies it. Write the last four words of the verse.

28. In your opinion, what do those last four words rule out?

WORD STUDY · TEN THOUSAND TALENTS (MATTHEW 18:24)

Ten thousand is a large round number. It is not the largest number the Greeks could think about, and they could think about very large ones. But it is the largest number that had its own single word. Past that they had to build: two myriads, or a myriad of myriads.

And the word points two directions. The lexicon gives the noun form of this word two meanings: a group of ten thousand, and a very large number, not precisely defined. That second one is the way we use "a million" when we say a person has told us a million times. Bill Mounce, who wrote the standard first-year Greek grammar, puts it about as plainly as it can be put: the word basically means a gajillion.

Now put that with the coin. The talent was the largest unit of money in use, and the NASB translators note that a single talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages for a working man. One talent. So Jesus took a very large number and multiplied it by the biggest coin there was.

Why it matters here: He is not estimating a large debt. He is building one nobody can pay, so that no listener can quietly work out a repayment plan while the story is going. The absurdity is the point.

And it works either way. If the number is exactly ten thousand talents, the debt is unpayable. If the number means "countless," the debt is unpayable. You do not have to settle which one Jesus meant to feel what the parable is doing.

Source: both money figures are the NASB 1995 translators' own notes — a denarius was a day's wages, and a talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages for a laborer. The two senses of the Greek word are from Mounce, "μυριάς, the Greek word for 'gajillion'," Zondervan Academic blog, citing BDAG. Note that Matthew 18:24 uses the numeral, while Mounce discusses the related noun. Full entries in Works Cited.

And note this: the arithmetic in this lesson survives an imprecise conversion. The fellow slave's debt is a number a man could count. The first one is not, and Jesus expects you to feel the difference.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Luke 17:3 says to forgive him IF he repents. Mark 11:25 says to forgive whenever you stand praying, with no condition attached. Which is it?"

This is a real question, careful brethren answer it differently, and I am not going to settle it for you in print. I will lay out the readings and tell you where I lean when we get there in class.

The first reading takes Luke 17:3 as the governing text. Forgiveness is a transaction between two parties, and like the king's release of the debt it happens when the offender comes and asks. On this view, Mark 11:25 is about clearing your own heart of the grudge so your prayer is not hindered, which is not the same act as pronouncing a man forgiven.

The second reading takes Mark 11:25 as the governing text. Forgiveness is something you do about your own heart, whether or not the other man ever comes, and Luke 17:3 is describing the fuller restoration that happens when he does.

A distinction some brethren use to hold both is between the disposition and the transaction: the readiness to forgive is required of you always and without condition, while the completed exchange, the reconciliation between two people, waits on repentance. Whichever conclusion you come to, notice this. Nobody reading either passage gets to keep a grudge. The disagreement is about what to call the thing you do, not about whether you may hold on to it.

This is one of the places I told you about in the Forward. Read both passages this week, decide what you believe, and be ready to say why.

FOR YOUR LIFE

29. Look back at your definition in question 2. Would you change it now? What changed?

30. The first slave was forgiven and then went straight out and choked somebody. He was not a hypocrite about the debt. What had he actually failed to understand?

31. Think about a wrong somebody has done you that you are still holding. Put it next to question 14. Not to make it small, because verse 28 says the hundred denarii was a real debt. Put them side by side and write what you see.

32. In your opinion, is it possible to say the words "I forgive you" and not do it from the heart? What would the difference look like from the outside?

THIS WEEK

33. Read Matthew 18:21-35 out loud once this week, all of it. Write the day you will do it.

34. Write one thing you will stop rehearsing. Nobody is reading this but you.

Bring this workbook back next week. Next Sunday is a road and a decision made in about four seconds.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 11: The Man Who Had Somewhere to Be.

Read before class: Luke 10:25-37 and Colossians 3:12-14.

One thing to watch for: three men come down that road and the text tells you what each one SAW. Watch what happens between the seeing and the doing in each case. It is not the same in all three.

LESSON 11

THE MAN WHO HAD SOMEWHERE TO BE

Luke 10:25-37; Colossians 3:12-14

LUKE 10:25-37

Reading before class: Luke 10:25-37 and Colossians 3:12-14.

Last week we did arithmetic on a debt. This week nobody owes anybody anything, and a man on a road has to decide something in about four seconds.

1. Think about the last week. Name one time you saw something that needed doing and kept going.

2. In your own words, what stops a good person from stopping? Not a bad person. A good one. We will come back to this.

THE QUESTION UNDERNEATH THE STORY

3. Read Luke 10:25. Who asks Jesus a question, what is the question, and what does Luke tell us about why he asked it?

4. Read Luke 10:26-27. Jesus turns it back on him. Write the answer the man gives.

5. Read Luke 10:28. What does Jesus say about his answer?

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6. Read Luke 10:29. The man asks a second question, and Luke tells us his motive again. What was he wishing to do, and how does that shape the question he asks?
-

7. Think about what a man is really after when he asks who his neighbor is. What is he hoping to find out?

THE ROAD

8. Read Luke 10:30. Where is the man going, and write down the four things the robbers did to him.

9. Note the last one especially: half dead. What does that condition do to anybody who finds him? He cannot ask for help and he cannot be ignored honestly.

FILL IN THE CHART

Read Luke 10:31-33 and fill this in for all three travelers. Then we will compare.

10. Who he was:

Traveler one: _____

Traveler two: _____

Traveler three: _____

11. What the text says he saw:

Traveler one: _____

Traveler two: _____

Traveler three: _____

12. What happened next:

Traveler one: _____

Traveler two: _____

Traveler three: _____

13. Look at your middle row. How many of the three saw him?

14. So seeing was not the difference. Something happened to one man between the seeing and the doing that did not happen to the other two. What was it?

15. Here is a thing worth knowing, and you already have half of it. The Greek word behind "felt compassion" here is the same word you wrote down last week. Go back to Lesson 10, question 11, where the king does three things before he forgives an unpayable debt. What is the first of the three?

16. So the same word stands over the king in that parable and the Samaritan on that road. What do those two men have in common that the priest and the Levite do not?

17. In your opinion, is that something a man can decide to have, or does it decide for him? Give your reasons.

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

- 1.** All three men saw the same thing.
- 2.** Two of them passed by on the other side, which took a decision and a change of direction.
- 3.** Between seeing and doing, one man felt compassion and the other two did not.
- 4.** Therefore the failure on that road was not a failure to notice. It was a failure between noticing and moving.

COUNT WHAT HE DID

- 18.** Read Luke 10:34-35 and list everything the Samaritan actually did. There are more than you think.

- 19.** How many did you get?

- 20.** Read verse 35 again. He pays two denarii. You worked out what a denarius was worth last week. So what did this cost him in time?

- 21.** Now look at the last sentence of verse 35, the promise about coming back. What does that open-ended promise tell you that the two denarii by itself does not?

THE QUESTION JESUS ASKS BACK

- 22.** Read Luke 10:36. Write the Lord's question out exactly.

- 23.** Put that beside the lawyer's question in verse 29. They are not the same question. What changed?

The lawyer asked: _____

Jesus asked: _____

- 24.** The lawyer's question sorts people into two piles. What does the Lord's question ask a man to examine instead?

25. Read Luke 10:37. Write the lawyer's answer, and notice the word he would not say.

26. Jesus ends with three words of command. Write them.

THE CLOTHES YOU PUT ON

27. Read Colossians 3:12. Paul says to put on five things. List them.

28. "Put on" is language about getting dressed. What does that image say about whether compassion is a temperament you were born with?

29. Read Colossians 3:14. What goes on over all of it, and what is love called there?

30. That last phrase is the theme verse of this whole quarter. After ten weeks, what do you think it means that love is the perfect bond of unity?

WORD STUDY · FELT COMPASSION

The word: it is built on the Greek word for the inward parts, the gut. Its one meaning in the New Testament, and it has only the one, is to be affected deeply in one's inner being, in that part of a man characterised by sympathy and compassion.

In plain words: it turned his stomach. He was moved before he moved.

Now look at who feels it. The word appears about a dozen times in the New Testament, and eight of those times the one feeling it is Jesus. He feels it looking at crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd, at a crowd that had gone three days without eating, at two blind men beside the road, and at a widow walking behind her son's coffin.

And the handful of other times? Look at the company. The king who cancelled a debt that could never be paid. The father who saw his boy a long way off and ran. And a Samaritan in a ditch.

That is the whole list. Jesus, and three men in three parables, every one of them showing mercy to somebody who could not pay it back. The Samaritan is not being praised for good manners. He is doing in that ditch what Jesus does everywhere in the Gospels.

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. Lemma σπλαγχνίζομαι, root σπλάγχνον "affection; inward parts," single sense to be deeply moved 12 of 12, aorist passive at Luke 10:33; the experiencer is tagged as Jesus 8 times, with the king of Matthew 18:27, the father of Luke 15:20 and the Samaritan of Luke 10:33 among the rest. Lexicons consulted: Kittel et al.; Strong. Full entries in Works Cited.

And note this: you do not need the Greek to see the shape of it. Your English Bible says the first two saw and passed by, and the third saw and felt compassion. The extra step is right there in the sentence.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Am I supposed to stop for everybody? I would never get anything done, and some of them are running a scam."

Fair, and I would rather answer it than let it sit there unspoken all week.

First, notice what the parable does not do. It does not give you a policy. Jesus does not say stop for every man on every road, and He does not tell you how to tell a real need from a fake one. He was asked for a definition and He told a story instead, and He did that on purpose, because the lawyer wanted a rule that would tell him when he was finished.

Second, notice what the parable costs. The Samaritan gave up his oil, his wine, his animal, two days of wages, a night of his schedule and an open promise for whatever more it ran to. This is not a story about being nice on the way past. Anybody using it to feel good about small kindnesses has not counted verse 35.

Third, on the priest and the Levite. The text never says they had bad motives. They may well have had somewhere to be, and it may well have been somewhere good. That is exactly what makes them dangerous to read about, because you and I are much likelier to be them than to be the robbers.

So here is the honest answer. The question Jesus leaves you with is not how many people you are obligated to stop for. It is question 36 in the text: which one of these proved to be a neighbor? That question is not answered by a policy. It is answered every time you are the one on the road.

FOR YOUR LIFE

31. Look back at your answer to question 2. Would you change it now? What changed?

32. Go back to question 1, the thing you saw and kept going past. Which of the three travelers were you that day, and be honest about why.

33. The Samaritan's help cost him money, time and inconvenience, and he was on a journey. In your opinion, which of those three do we guard the hardest around here?

- 34.** Colossians 3:12 says put these on. Name the one of the five you have to put on most deliberately, because it does not come naturally to you.
-

THIS WEEK

- 35.** Name one person you will probably pass this week who is half dead in some way that is not physical.
-

- 36.** Write down what stopping would actually cost you, and then write whether you will pay it.
-

Bring this workbook back next week. Next Sunday is about a family, and it may be the hardest hour of this quarter for some of you.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 12: Twenty-Two Years Later.

Read before class: Genesis 45:1-8 and Genesis 50:15-21. If you have time, read Genesis 37 as well.

One thing to watch for: in Genesis 50 the brothers come to Joseph afraid. Count how many years have gone by since they threw him in that pit, and ask yourself what they had been carrying the whole time.

LESSON 12

TWENTY-TWO YEARS LATER

Genesis 50:15-21; Genesis 45:4-8; 1 Peter 3:8-9; Ephesians 6:1-4

GENESIS 50:15-21 · GENESIS 45:4-8

Reading before class: Genesis 45:1-8 and Genesis 50:15-21. If you have time, read Genesis 37 as well.

I want to say something before we begin. This is the only lesson in this quarter aimed at your house instead of this building, and some of you are carrying something old. Work it at your own pace and nobody is going to ask you to read your answers out loud. And what I said in the Forward stands: if what you are carrying is bigger than a workbook page, come find me.

1. Without naming anybody, write down how long the oldest unresolved thing in your family has been going on.
years.

2. In your own words, what is the difference between forgiving somebody and being close to them again? We will come back to this and it is the most important question in this lesson.

BUILD THE TIMELINE

Everything you need is in four verses. Look each one up and do the arithmetic.

3. Read Genesis 37:2. How old was Joseph when his brothers threw him in the pit and sold him?
years old.

4. Read Genesis 41:46. How old was he when he stood before Pharaoh?
years old.

5. After that came seven years of plenty. Then read Genesis 45:6. How far into the famine were they when his brothers showed up?
years.

6. Now add it up. How old was Joseph when he told his brothers who he was?
years old.

7. Subtract. How many years passed between the pit and the moment he said "I am your brother

Joseph"?

years.

8. Read Genesis 47:28. Jacob lived seventeen more years in Egypt, and Genesis 50 happens after he dies. So roughly how long after the pit is the scene in Genesis 50?
About years.

WHAT THE BROTHERS WERE STILL AFRAID OF

9. Read Genesis 50:15. What do the brothers say to each other when their father dies?

10. Stop and think about that. Joseph told them who he was in chapter 45 and wept on their necks. They have now lived beside him for seventeen more years, and look at what they still believe about him.

In your opinion, why did they not believe him?

11. Read Genesis 50:16-17. What do they send Joseph, and whose authority do they put behind it?

12. Read the end of verse 17. What does Joseph do when the message reaches him?

13. Why would that make a man weep? Put yourself in his chair for a second. He has fed these men for seventeen years.

WHAT JOSEPH ACTUALLY SAID

- 14.** Read Genesis 50:18. What do the brothers do and say when they come themselves?

- 15.** Read Genesis 50:19. Joseph answers with a question. Write it out.

- 16.** That is a strange thing to say. What is Joseph refusing to be, and why would that be the first thing out of his mouth?

- 17.** Read Genesis 50:20. Write the two halves of that sentence.

They meant: _____

God meant: _____

- 18.** Look hard at the first half. Does Joseph deny that what they did was evil?

- 19.** So Joseph is holding two things at once. Say them both in one sentence.

- 20.** Read Genesis 50:21. Joseph does three things. Write all three, and notice that only one of them is words.

THE EARLIER SCENE

- 21.** Read Genesis 45:4. How does Joseph identify himself, and what phrase does he attach?

- 22.** He names what they did to his face. Why does he say that part out loud instead of skipping past it?

23. Read Genesis 45:5. What does he tell them not to do to themselves?

24. In your opinion, what is the difference between "it was not that bad" and what Joseph actually says here?

TWO THINGS THAT ARE NOT THE SAME THING

This is the part I most want you to get right, and it is where a great deal of harm gets done by people who mean well.

25. Go back to the whole Joseph account. Who moved first, Joseph or the brothers? Look at Genesis 45:4 and Genesis 50:19-21 before you answer.

26. Now think about what Joseph could NOT do by himself. He could release them. Could he make them stop being afraid of him?

27. Genesis 50 proves it. Seventeen years after he forgave them, they were still afraid. So whose work was left undone, and could Joseph have done it for them?

28. In your own words, then: what is a person commanded to do, and what is the thing that takes two?

Commanded of me: _____

Takes both of us: _____

AT HOME

- 29.** Read 1 Peter 3:8-9. Peter lists five things and then forbids two. Write the two things forbidden and the one thing commanded in their place.

Forbidden: _____

Instead: _____

- 30.** Read Ephesians 6:1-4. Paul gives a command to children and a command to fathers. Notice that he does not only correct the young ones. What is the father told not to do?

- 31.** In your opinion, why would God put a command to parents right beside a command to children?

WORD STUDY · MEANT (GENESIS 50:20)

It is the same Hebrew verb both times. "You meant evil against me" and "God meant it for good" run on one word, and both are in the same stem and the same tense. Your English gives you meant twice because the Hebrew gives you the same verb twice.

But now look closer, because the two halves are not identical. That verb covers a range: to consider, to reckon, to calculate, to plan, and to plot. And the two halves of this verse are read differently. The brothers' half is the plotting one: to plan secretly, and usually to plan something wicked. God's half is the plain planning one: to work out a plan, to devise.

Think about that, because it is careful, and it matters. Scripture uses one verb for both, so nobody can pretend the brothers' scheming and God's purpose were unrelated. But the wickedness is half of the verb and not in His. They plotted. He planned. The verse does not say God plotted anything, and it does not say the brothers did something neutral that God later made use of.

Why it matters here: this is exactly what Joseph is holding onto with both hands. What they did was evil and he says so out loud. God was working the whole time and he says that too. The Hebrew lets him hold both without softening either one, and any reading that makes God the author of what the brothers did has gone past what the sentence says.

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. Both forms are נָשָׂא, Qal perfect: the brothers' second-person plural, tagged sense to plot, "to plan secretly, usually something wicked"; God's third-person singular, tagged sense to plan (devise), "to make or work out a plan for." Lexicons consulted: Brown et al.; Gesenius and Tregelles; Strong. Full entries in Works Cited.

And note this: your English Bible already gives you the same word twice in one verse. That by itself is the point, and you can see it without a word of Hebrew.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Does forgiving somebody mean going back to them? What if the person who hurt me is dangerous?"

No. Forgiving is not returning, and I want to be as plain about this as I know how to be.

Nothing in this lesson, and nothing in this book, teaches that forgiving a person requires you to put yourself back within reach of harm. If anybody has ever told you that, they were not teaching you the Bible. Joseph's brothers were not dangerous to him by Genesis 50. He was the ruler of Egypt and they were terrified of him. That is not everybody's situation and the passage does not pretend it is.

Here is the distinction, and it is the one question 28 was driving at. Scripture commands you to forgive. That is between you and God and it does not wait on the other person. Reconciliation is a different thing. It takes two people, it requires trust, and trust is rebuilt over time by conduct. Joseph forgave in chapter 45 and his brothers were still afraid of him seventeen years later, which tells you the two are not the same and that one of them was not finished.

And on safety, plainly. Where there is danger, getting to a safe place is not a failure to forgive. It is not a spiritual compromise and it is not a lack of faith. Safety first, always, and the harder questions get worked out after somebody is safe.

If any of this is your situation rather than a hypothetical, please come talk to me, or to one of the elders, and do not work it out alone with a workbook.

FOR YOUR LIFE

32. Look back at your answer to question 2. Would you change it now? What changed?

33. Go back to question 1 and the number of years you wrote. Compare it to your answer in question 7.

34. Joseph's brothers spent decades afraid of a man who had already released them. Is there somebody who is afraid of you, or careful around you, who does not need to be?

35. In your opinion, which is harder in a family: to forgive, or to believe you have been forgiven?

THIS WEEK

36. Genesis 50:21 says Joseph comforted them and spoke kindly to them. That is not a feeling, it is something he said out loud. Name one person in your family who needs to hear something out loud from you.

37. Write what you will say, and when. If the honest answer this week is that you are not ready, write that instead and write what you will do about your own heart in the meantime.

Bring this workbook back next week. Next Sunday is the last one and it is the one the whole quarter has been pointing to.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 13: As Far as the East Is From the West.

Read before class: Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13, Matthew 6:14-15 and Psalm 103.

One thing to watch for: Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13 both end the same way, with a short comparison. Find it in both, and notice that it is not telling you how much to forgive. It is telling you what to copy.

LESSON 13

AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST

Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; Matthew 6:14-15; Psalm 103:8-14

EPHESIANS 4:32 · PSALM 103:8-14

Reading before class: Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13, Matthew 6:14-15 and Psalm 103.

This is the last lesson of the quarter and it is the one everything else has been pointing toward. If this is your first Sunday with us, you have not missed anything you need. This lesson stands on its own and you can work every question in it without having been here before.

For twelve weeks we have talked about what we owe one another. Today we look at the pattern all of it is copied from.

1. Think of a time somebody forgave you for something real. Do not write what it was. Write what you expected to happen instead.

2. In your own words, what does God actually do with a sin He forgives? Where does it go? We will come back to this.

THE THREE WORDS AT THE END OF BOTH VERSES

3. Read Ephesians 4:32. Write the three commands Paul gives.

-
4. Now write the phrase that ends the verse, the comparison Paul attaches.

-
5. Read Colossians 3:13. Write the comparison that ends that verse.

-
6. Those two are almost the same sentence in two different letters. Notice what the comparison is NOT doing. It is not telling you how many times or how much. What is it telling you?

7. In your opinion, why would God give us a pattern to copy instead of a rule to keep?

WHAT COMES RIGHT BEFORE IT

8. Read Ephesians 4:31, the verse just before. What six things are to be put away?
9. So verse 31 takes something off and verse 32 puts something on. Why would Paul refuse to leave a man with only the taking off?

10. Read Colossians 3:13 again, the first part. What comes before the forgiving in that verse?

11. In your own words, what is the difference between bearing with somebody and forgiving them? You will need both.

THE VERSE THAT MAKES PEOPLE UNCOMFORTABLE

12. Read Matthew 6:14. Write what Jesus promises.

13. Read Matthew 6:15. Write the other half.

14. That is a hard sentence and Jesus said it plainly. What does He connect to what?

15. Look Matthew 6:9-13 first. What has Jesus just finished teaching, and why would He attach this to it?

- 16.** In your opinion, is Jesus saying we earn God's forgiveness by forgiving? If not, what is He saying? Give your reasons.
-

THREE COMPARISONS IN A ROW

Now turn to Psalm 103. David stacks three comparisons back to back and every one of them is measuring something about God.

- 17.** Read Psalm 103:11. What two things are being compared, and what is being measured?
-

- 18.** Read Psalm 103:12. What two things are being compared here, and what has been moved?
-

- 19.** Read Psalm 103:13. What two things are compared in this one?
-

- 20.** Notice how verse 13 begins. It uses the same two words Paul used at the end of Ephesians 4:32. Write them.
-

- 21.** Think about verse 12 for a minute. Why east and west? North and south both run out at a pole. What happens if you keep going east?
-

- 22.** So how far has God moved our transgressions from us, and what does that distance say about whether He goes back and gets them?
-

HOW HE HAS NOT DEALT WITH US

- 23.** Read Psalm 103:10. David says two things God has NOT done. Write both.
-

24. Read Psalm 103:8-9. List what God is called, and then what He will not do forever.

25. Read Psalm 103:14. Why does God deal with us that way, according to David?

26. Put verse 14 beside Ephesians 4:32. He knows what we are made of, and He forgives us anyway, and then He says forgive each other the same way. What does that ask of you toward the person you find hardest?

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. Both Paul's commands end by pointing at God, not at a quantity.
2. Psalm 103 says the distance He put between us and our sins has no end to it.
3. He does it knowing exactly what we are, and He does not go back and get them.
4. Therefore Christian forgiveness is not a rule we keep. It is a pattern we copy, and the pattern is God's own conduct toward us.

WORD STUDY · AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST

The picture: David does not compare it to any fixed distance. He picks two directions that run away from each other and never meet.

What it means in plain words: there is no number. North and south have ends to them, since a man walking north eventually stands at the top and starts walking south. East and west have no such point. A man walking east goes east forever.

Why it matters here: David could have said God removed our sins a very great way. He said something with no measurement in it at all.

And note this: the verse does its own work. It says as far, and then it names the one distance that cannot be closed.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Matthew 6:15 says if I do not forgive, God will not forgive me. Does that mean I am earning it?"

That verse troubles people and it should be answered rather than hurried past.

Start with what the whole quarter has shown. Nothing in Ephesians 4:32 or Colossians 3:13 puts you first in line. Both verses say to forgive just as God forgave you, which means His forgiving already happened and yours is the copy. You cannot copy something that has not gone first. So earning is ruled out by the grammar before we ever get to Matthew 6.

Now read Matthew 6:15 for what it says. Jesus is not describing a transaction where your forgiving buys God's. He is describing a man who has received something enormous and will not pass along something small. We looked at that man three weeks ago in Matthew 18. He was released from a debt he could never pay and then he choked a man over a hundred days' wages, and his release did not survive it.

So the honest answer is this. A person who has genuinely taken in what God did for him will forgive, imperfectly and sometimes slowly, but he will. A settled refusal to forgive anybody, ever, is evidence that the thing was never received in the first place. Jesus is not putting a price on grace. He is telling you what grace looks like when it has been received.

And if you are here this morning and the refusing is where you are, that is worth saying out loud to somebody. Come find me.

FOR YOUR LIFE

27. Look back at your answer to question 2. Would you change it now? What changed?

28. Psalm 103:12 says God removed our transgressions that far away. Do you talk to yourself about your own forgiven sins as though He did?

29. Ephesians 4:32 says to forgive just as God forgave you. Name the way God has forgiven you that you find hardest to copy. Not the person. The way.

- 30.** In your opinion, after thirteen weeks: what is the one thing this congregation would look most different for, if we actually did what we have studied?
-

THIS WEEK

Two things, and both of them are small enough to do.

- 31.** Write down one name. Just for you. Nobody will ask for it.
-

- 32.** Write the first small step, and put a day on it. A phone call, a text, a sentence at a door. Not the whole thing. The first step.
-

If you are here for the first time this morning, there is one more thing.

Everything in this lesson is about copying what God has already done for people who are in Christ. If you have never obeyed the gospel, the pattern is not yours to copy yet, and that is the more urgent question. Ephesians 4:32 says God forgave you in Christ. That is where the forgiveness is. If you want to know how a person comes to be in Christ, ask me before you leave today, or ask anyone here. Nobody will think it is a strange question.

That is the end of this quarter. Thank you for working it. Keep this book, because you wrote things in it in September that you will want to read again.

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

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