



Life Group Leader Guide Week 2 | Chapters 3 and 4

Week 2: *Forgive*

Scripture: Matthew 18:21–35; Ephesians 4:31–32; James 1:22–24

Big idea: Forgiveness is giving. Freely I have received forgiveness, so freely I give forgiveness.

Opener (optional): When you were a kid, what was the hardest thing to say: "I'm sorry," "I forgive you," or "I was wrong"? Why?

Leader tip: if the group goes quiet, resist filling the silence. Count to ten. The best answers in a group like this usually come after the pause.

- Open with prayer and have someone read **Ephesians 2:1–10** out loud, slowly. Consider having a second person read verses 8–10 again at the end.
- Warm-up question to get everyone talking: *"What's the hardest thing you've ever had to let go of and did you let go willingly or did it get pried loose?"*
- Suggested timing: Talk It Out (20 min) · Work It Out (25 min) · Live It Out (20 min) · Prayer (10 min). These times are suggested and not rigid. You know your group and flow best.
- You won't get through every question. Pick the two in each section that fit your group and let the conversation breathe.

1. Talk It Out

Peter wanted a number: "Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "Seventy times seven." Why do you think we want a limit on forgiveness, and what does Jesus' answer show about how He sees it?

- The servant was forgiven 10,000 talents and then choked a man over 100 denarii. Jack Hayford writes: "even as Christians, we're comfortable being forgiven without being forgiving." Why is it so easy to lose sight of how much we've been forgiven?
- Hayford describes times to "give over," placing into the hands of the Creator-Judge matters that only His justice can handle. The sermon put it as "forgiveness puts justice in God's hands." What in chapters 3–4 or Sunday's message challenged you most, and why?

2. Work It Out

- "Forgiveness releases the person, not the trauma," and "forgiveness is not reconciliation or trust." How does separating those change the way you think about forgiving someone who hasn't apologized or hasn't changed?
- "Unforgiveness isn't missed salvation; it is abandoned peace." The servant threw his offender into prison and ended up in prison himself. Where have you seen bitterness lock up the person holding onto it, whether in your own life or someone else's?
- Read Ephesians 4:31–32 aloud. We're told to forgive "just as God in Christ also forgave you." God forgave freely, fully, and before we deserved it. Which of those is hardest for you to extend to others?

3. Live It Out

- Pastor Cody gave three ways to give: give up your claim to be right, give over your bitterness and demand for justice, and give in to the Holy Spirit's leading. Which one is hardest for you right now, and what makes it hard?
- Walk through the first two steps of R.E.A.C.H. (Recall and Empathize). Without naming anyone, did a hurt come to mind during Sunday's message? What might it look like to see that person through the eyes of Jesus?
- The Commit step says to write it down: "Today I forgive ___ for ___." That may need to happen daily. When the feelings come back, what will help you remember you made that choice, and how can this group support you?
- **Close:** Give everyone a quiet minute to write their "Today I forgive..." statement privately. Then pray together for the courage to give up, give over, and give in.

