

# RIVERS CROSSING COMMUNITY CHURCH

## Community Group Discussion Guide – Life In Technicolor Week #9

*The Power of Forgiveness* / November 14, 2021 / Pastor Paul Taylor



### GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Questions | Do you have a favorite time of day or location to pray? What prayer have you been praying the longest? Alternately, what prayer has been answered for you recently?
2. At the end of Sunday's service, there was a time of reflection and prayer prior to taking communion. During this reflection time, we were to listen for the Holy Spirit and write down an application related to forgiveness. Perhaps a person we need to forgive, something we need to be set free from, or something we need to forgive ourselves for doing since God has already forgiven us through faith in Jesus Christ.  
Share about your experience during this reflection time. What specifically did you write on your card? What emotions did you feel? How do you hope God empowers you to take this step of forgiveness?

### DIVING DEEPER

3. Forgiveness is a fundamental aspect of the Christian faith, so it's important we understand forgiveness. In his book *Total Forgiveness*, R.T. Kendall teaches that forgiveness is not...
  - Approval of what they did
  - Excusing what they did
  - Justifying what they did
  - Pardoning what they did
  - Reconciliation
  - Denying what they did
  - Blindness to what happened
  - Forgetting
  - Refusing to take the wrong seriously
  - Pretending we are not hurt
- a) What do you think of R.T. Kendall's list of things that forgiveness is not? Are there aspects of his list that you believe should be included in an understanding of forgiveness?
- b) If you've struggled to extend forgiveness to others, does R.T. Kendall's list provide any help or greater clarity for what forgiveness looks like? Explain your answer.
- c) How would you define biblical forgiveness?

4. It's been said that forgiveness always comes at a cost. That idea was examined by Pastor Timothy Keller in an article titled "Serving Each Other Through Forgiveness and Reconciliation."<sup>1</sup> Read a portion of that article together and discuss the corresponding questions.

1. To access the full article, visit <https://peacewise.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017-Tim-Keller-Serving-each-other-through-forgiveness-and-reconciliation-1.pdf>

"Forgiveness means giving up the right to seek repayment from the one who harmed you. But it must be recognized that forgiveness is a *form of voluntary suffering*. What does that mean?

Think about how monetary debts work. If a friend breaks my lamp, and if the lamp costs fifty dollars to replace, then the act of lamp-breaking incurs a debt of fifty dollars. If I let him pay for and replace the lamp, I get my lamp back and he's out fifty dollars. But if I *forgive him* for what he did, the debt does not somehow vanish into thin air. When I forgive him, I absorb the cost and payment for the lamp: either I will pay the fifty dollars to replace it or I will lose the lighting in that room. To forgive is to cancel a debt by paying it or absorbing it yourself. Someone always pays every debt. This is the case in all situations of wrongdoing, even when no money is involved. When you are sinned against, you lose some thing—perhaps happiness, reputation, peace of mind, a relationship, or an opportunity...

In all cases when wrong is done there is a debt, and there is no way to deal with it without suffering: either you make the perpetrator suffer for it or you forgive and suffer for it yourself."

- a) Do you agree or disagree with Keller's statement that forgiveness is a form of voluntary suffering? What, if anything, does Keller's writing add to your own understanding of forgiveness?

- b) Read Colossians 2:13-14 and 1 Peter 2:19-25. What stands out to you from these passages about what Jesus Christ did to secure our forgiveness before God?

When we forgive others, how might it be said that we are following in the footsteps of Jesus?

**Colossians 2:13-14 (ESV)** – <sup>13</sup>And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup>by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

**1 Peter 2:19-25 (ESV)** – <sup>19</sup>For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup>For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. <sup>21</sup>For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup>He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup>When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. <sup>24</sup>He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup>For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

5. Read Matthew 18:21-35. This passage of scripture is known as the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. Then discuss the corresponding questions.

**Matthew 18:21-35 (NIV)** – <sup>21</sup>Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” <sup>22</sup>Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. <sup>23</sup>“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup>As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. <sup>25</sup>Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. <sup>26</sup>“At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ <sup>27</sup>The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

<sup>28</sup>“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. <sup>29</sup>“His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’ <sup>30</sup>“But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. <sup>31</sup>When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

<sup>32</sup>“Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup>Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ <sup>34</sup>In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. <sup>35</sup>“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

- a) The amount of debt the servant owed the king is described as 10,000 bags of gold (verse 24). The amount of debt that another servant owed the servant whose debts had just been forgiven by the king is described as 100 silver coins (verse 28). Have someone look up these monetary amounts in terms of a day laborer’s wage. Most Bibles will have this information listed in the footnotes.
- b) What lesson is Jesus teaching about forgiveness through this parable? How does the large disparity in debts owed by the two servants emphasize this point?

## TAKING IT HOME

6. Where is God calling you to step into greater forgiveness in your life? Is there a particular person or situation he has placed on your heart? What does this next step of forgiveness look like for you?

Perhaps this next step looks like...

- Admitting you’ve been hurt and vowing to talk with God about your pain
- Reaching out to talk with someone about the situation you find yourself in
- Forgiving yourself for what you know God has already forgiven you in Jesus
- Speaking or writing words of forgiveness to another person
- Refusing to indulge in ill-will in your heart toward another person
- Praying for God to bless another person
- Moving beyond forgiveness and seeking to reconcile

**Matthew 5:38-48 (NIV)** – <sup>38</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ <sup>39</sup>But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. <sup>40</sup>And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. <sup>41</sup>If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. <sup>42</sup>Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. <sup>43</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup>But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup>that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup>If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? <sup>47</sup>And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? <sup>48</sup>Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

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## RIVERS CROSSING – THINGS TO KNOW

1. Care Team | The Care Team is designed to help the hurting through personal interaction and prayer. We encourage anyone dealing with major health issues, divorce, grief, financial crisis or any other difficulty to reach out by completing the Care Request Form. Someone will contact you within 48 hours. Each situation is handled individually and confidentially. Learn more by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/care-team/>.
2. 2022 Discipleship School | Discipleship School is a one-year program that helps Christians from all backgrounds become fully engaged followers of Christ. The school helps students learn to hear God’s voice clearly, experience a full and free life, develop intimacy with God, develop Christlike living, and understand their spiritual gifting. For more information, or to apply for the Discipleship School, click on the link below. <https://riverscrossing.com/discipleship-school/>
3. Baptisms – Sunday November 21<sup>st</sup> | We believe baptism is an integral part of your spiritual journey and necessary as you seek to become a fully engaged follower of Christ. If you've recently decided to follow Jesus or you've been a Christ follower for a while but never gotten baptized, now is the perfect time to take this next step! Learn more and sign up by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/baptism/>.
4. Plan A Visit | Have an individual or family you want to invite to Rivers Crossing? If so, we’d love for them to utilize our Plan A Visit tool. Share this link with them: <https://connect-card.com/zTE3I3TXmFG0TgizStLj>.