



## WEEK 2 – DEFYING GRAVITY

### CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... what is the jam you put on in the car and sing at the top of your lungs? Do you rock an 80s power ballad? Maybe it's a Disney tune and belt your best Ariel? Or, are you the quiet type, let the singers do the singing?

### OPENING PRAYER

God of Healing, walk with us on the path of forgiveness, and begin a work of healing in the pain.

### INTRODUCTION

Today's song from the musical, *Wicked*, is one of those certified powerhouse bangers that many people, (maybe too many people,) belt at the top of their lungs. But we'll get there. First, let's remind ourselves why we're doing this series. See, God gave us the

foundational command to love Him, and just below that, to love others. But, God also knew we're human, and we would fail, often miserably, at that. And if we were going to strive for love, but then screw it up, we would need a mechanism for restoring what gets broken. That thing, the mechanism for restoration... is forgiveness. And the musical, *Wicked*, sets a perfect backdrop to talk about the journey of forgiveness. We began last week with step 1, *Absolution*, that is, making the initial decision to let go of the grudge we hold against that person. Absolving someone is not saying that what they did was okay, or that everything is now fine. You're simply letting go of the grudge. That's absolution. Today, we'll talk about the next steps you can take now that you've begun the journey. But first...

**Intro Question: How did you do with *absolution* this week? Were you able to take that first step on the journey of forgiveness? Or are all your relationships perfect, no absolution needed?**

## THE SONG

Last week, we left Elphaba, (the merely misunderstood "wicked" witch,) and Glinda, (the bubbly-to-the-point-of-annoying "good" witch,) as roommates who've butted heads and expressed their "utter loathing" in typical musical style, through biting lyrics. However, after a compassionate act that serves as a bit of an olive branch, Glinda and Elphaba become frenemies. They're still butting heads, but they've done the absolution part of forgiveness. However, a problem arises... Elphaba discovers the source of the oppression in Oz and decides she has to take a stand. Glinda thinks she's going about it the wrong way,

and though they respect each other's positions, they decide they can no longer walk their journeys together. This is where we get this showstopping number at the end of act 1.

**Listen to “Defying Gravity” from wicked. (Movie or Broadway, your choice.)**

Elphie and Glinda both see the path ahead of them, and though they know they aren't going to journey it together anymore, they are beginning the *next* step on the path of forgiveness.

**Question 1: Okay, we have lots to cover today... so, simple question for this one, how good is this song?! Scale of 1 to 10: 1 = “meh, I don't see the hype,” to 10 = “Rocking this on the drive home.”**

## THE SCRIPTURE

So, we've said, “I forgive you.” Done and dusted, problem solved, series over, on to Thanksgiving, right? Well, no. a) It's not that easy, and b) we have a lot more musical to cover. How often do we have the experience, “I'm just not over the pain this person caused. I forgave them. I said I forgave them, and I really meant it... but I'm still hurt. Why don't I feel better?” Well, that's why forgiveness is a journey with multiple steps. At that point, you've only completed step 1, the *absolution* part. Which is great, that's an incredible first step. It frees you up to continue the journey, like taking off the chains of the grudge which will allow you to walk the path. Absolution is great, saying “I forgive you” is great. But there's still a path to walk. The pain

doesn't magically go away. So, what do we do? Well, let's go back to our scripture. Remember, we're sticking in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Colossians for the whole series, but we're bouncing around to make the process makes sense. So, let's look at two more verses...

**Read Colossians, chapter 3, verse 8. Then read verse 12.**

In these two verses, Paul juxtaposes two sets of behaviors... one of which will hinder our journey of forgiveness, and another which will propel us down the path.

**Question 2: You're a member of the church in Colossae listening to this letter being read during a gathering. When the leader gets to these two verses, how do you feel? What stands out? Is it convicting, challenging, discouraging, or just plain Paul-being-Paul?**

## REFLECTION

Elphie and Glinda both see the path ahead of them, and though they know they aren't going to journey it together anymore, they are beginning the next step on that path of forgiveness. See, once you've absolved the person and take off the chains of the grudge and revenge, you can start walking the path forward and begin the next leg of the journey...

## HEALING

See, absolving the person breaks the chains so you can start walking the path. The problem now is that this next stretch of the journey is straight up hill. Healing is really difficult. It can be a long process. It can be a meandering, tedious path with moments of great progression and periods of devastating setback. This leg of the journey can feel like trying to Defy Gravity. Notice the lyrics. Elphaba talks about all the things that try to bring her down: limits, self-doubt, loss, futility, the cost of trying. And that's how the healing stage of forgiveness feels: like you're trying to break free, but everything is working against you.

And this is why, so often, even after you've said the words, "I forgive you," you may still feel hurt and anger, because there are so many things working against you and you haven't healed yet. You may still see the person who caused the pain for the first time in a while, and that heart rate rises, and the palms get sweaty. It might also be more surreptitious than that. You come to an anniversary of the bad thing happening, or hear a song or a phrase that reminds you of the injury, and you're taken right back to that point of pain. Healing is tough, but it's possible.

**Question 3: Consider a time in your life when you've been in this situation where you've been on the healing journey but something drug you right back into the heart of the hurt. If you're comfortable sharing, describe the experience. If not, speak about it in general terms. What made it difficult? How did you get through? (This can bring up difficult feelings for folks... hold space for those emotions.)**

So, what do we do? How do we begin to heal? Well, first, we have to address it. We have to acknowledge that we can't just say the words, "I forgive you," and think we're done. It would be easier to go back to life and just pretend that everything's peachy. But when we don't do the work to heal, we wonder why we still hurt weeks, months, years down the road. So, the first step in healing is to acknowledge that the work is just beginning. Okay, but then, what does the actual work look like? Well, let's go back to our scripture for that. Reread verse 8.

**<sup>8</sup> But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language.**

Paul is giving the Colossians, (and therefore us,) a good pointer here on how to begin the work of healing. Even, after you absolve the person and say the words, "I forgive you," you might still hold onto some anger. "Yeah, I forgave you, but the sight of you still makes me nauseated." You might still enact some malicious behavior, "I forgive you, but I'm going to make sure the boss knows what you did, so you don't get that promotion." You might be tempted to gossip or slander, "Yeah, I forgave them... but let me tell you what they did so you're on my side and not theirs." And dirty language... well, it's therapeutic to call them every name in the book when you're driving down the road in your car by yourself, right?

Paul's not dumb. He knows we are prone to these things even after we absolve someone. But, here's the problem. When you continue this behavior, you pull those chains right back on. You hoist up the

weight of the grudge. You strap back on the anchor of revenge. And you try to walk this path of healing carrying all that burden. And you either make it exceedingly difficult on yourself or you never fully forgive. You can't defy gravity carrying those chains. So, begin the work of healing by shedding the behavior that prevents you from moving forward.

**Question 4: Okay, confession time... look at the list. Which of these do you struggle with? Which do you feel you have good control over? What makes controlling that negative behavior difficult?**

All right, that's what we need to *stop* doing in order to begin healing. What do we need to *start* doing? For that, let's look at the verse 12.

**<sup>12</sup> Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.**

Yeah, breathe that in for a moment. The last verse told us the negative things that would hold us back. This verse tells us the things we need to pick up, to start doing, that will move us down the path of forgiveness: "Clothe yourselves" with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. In the musical, during this song is where Elphaba becomes the icon we know as the wicked witch. There's a powerful moment in the movie where she dons the iconic pointed hat, Glinda wraps her in the quintessential black cape, and she receives the archetypal magic broom. She becomes what she is

going to be for the next leg of her journey. In the musical, these are not evil things, they are what make her who she is, and what set her on the path to move forward.

For us, the iconic “garments” that will help us move forward on the path of forgiveness are these things Paul lists. *Tenderhearted mercy and kindness...* It’s more than just *not* slandering the person or not ruining their chance for the promotion. It’s actively speaking positively about them, actively looking for the *good* in them. You absolved them... now, start the healing by doing something kind FOR them. This begins to change your heart toward them and begins to change their heart toward you. This can be truly difficult, and you won’t want to. But donning the hat of kindness can be a HUGE step in the healing process. *Humility...* holding onto anger, malice, slander, dirty language is a form of pride and selfishness. It’s makes us feel better in the moment, but those only work *for* a moment. They’re like an addiction. We become addicted to the grudge. We need these things again and again to feel better. What makes you feel better in the long run, what gets you down the path of healing, is sucking up that pride for a bit, putting aside your selfishness, and putting on the cape of humility and doing the positive things. And gentleness and patience... that’s the magical broom that helps you defy gravity. Paul probably means to be gentle with others. But let’s flip it. Be gentle and patient with *yourself*. The absolution can happen in day, but the *healing* journey can take months, years... there’s no timeline. Be gentle with yourself. Be patient.



**Question 5: Flip the coin over... which of these do you feel you do well? Which do you wish you did better? What would it look like to apply that positive behavior to a current forgiveness situation?**

## **CLOSING**

So, step one is absolution... make the initial step to drop the chains of grudges and revenge. This allows you to begin the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the journey, healing. And this part takes work. First, acknowledge that the work is just beginning, and then begin by letting go of the negative things that hold you back from walking the path, anger, malice, slander, and then clothe yourself with the things that will move you down the path, tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Healing is difficult. Healing has no timeline. But when you focus on these positive things, they'll help you defy gravity.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations  
and close in prayer.**