



CORNER FRINGE MINISTRIES
FREEDOM IN MESSIAH

Student Guide | Week 9
The Bitter Water at Marah

THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

Chapter 9 is about this: unforgiveness is not a moral failing — it is a prison. And the cruellest part is that the person imprisoned is not the one who did the harm. It is the one who was harmed.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

LAST WEEK

We separated the voice of the accuser from the voice of God. We learned that condemnation moves you away from God and conviction moves you toward Him. We declared that there is now no condemnation for those in Messiah.

THIS WEEK

We deal with the hardest act of freedom — forgiving the person who doesn't deserve it. Not because they earned it. Because you were made for more than a life defined by what someone did to you.

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY ANCHOR

"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Messiah also has forgiven you."

Ephesians 4:32 | LSB

A THOUGHT TO CARRY INTO THE WEEK

Moses did not drink the bitter water or argue with the people grumbling at him. He brought the bitterness to God — and God showed him a tree. He threw it in. And the bitter water became sweet. That is the pattern of forgiveness. You don't resolve bitterness by managing it better or by convincing yourself the offense didn't matter. You bring it to God. And He does the work of transformation that you cannot do for yourself.

This week is about that act. Not the feeling of forgiveness — the decision.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN — A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take 2 minutes before your group starts. Write your honest answer privately. You will not be required to share this — but you may want to.

IS THERE A PERSON WHOSE NAME — OR WHOSE MEMORY — STILL HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE YOUR MOOD OR PULL YOU BACK INTO A STORY YOU HAVE TOLD YOURSELF A THOUSAND TIMES? NAME THEM PRIVATELY HERE.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Week 9 | *The Bitter Water at Marah*

Total time: 60 minutes | No facilitator needed — follow the steps

HOW THIS WORKS

There is no leader in this group — everyone follows the steps together. Each step has a time guide. Stay with the step you are on. If someone in the group needs more time on a particular step, the group can choose to stay — that is the right call. The structure serves the people, not the other way around.

The goal is not to get through all five steps. The goal is that every person in this group leaves having done real work — and none of you leaves alone.

STEP 1 LAND THE TEACHING 8–10 minutes

Someone in the group reads this aloud before anyone responds:

This week the teaching confronted us with one of the most honest questions in the curriculum: is there a person whose name still has power over your present? Israel stood three days removed from the greatest miracle they had ever seen — and they were bitter toward Moses. Bitterness has a name in Hebrew. Marah. It is not just an emotion. It is a place you can take up residence in. Peter asked Yeshua how many times he should forgive — thinking seven was generous. Yeshua said seventy times seven. He was not doing math. He was saying: stop counting. Because the person who is counting offenses is still living inside the offense.

Take 2 minutes of silence. Answer this privately before anyone speaks:

DISCUSS:

What has unforgiveness actually cost you — in peace, in your closest relationships, in your walk with God — that you have never named out loud?

MY HONEST ANSWER TO STEP 1:

Now go around the group. Each person shares — as honestly as they are able. No cross-talk while someone is sharing. When everyone has spoken, move to Step 2.

STEP 2 THE ROOT WORK 15–20 minutes

Turn back to Page 1 and complete the Root Question Framework privately if you have not already done so. Take 5 minutes. Write it down — the act of writing forces honesty that thinking alone does not.

For this week, as you fill in the framework: the behavior may be the way you treat the person you are holding, or what you do when their name comes up. The feeling beneath it is likely anger, grief, or a sense of injustice. The lie beneath that is something you believe about yourself, about God, or about whether justice will ever come. The truth is what God says about who you are and whether He can be trusted with what was done to you.

After everyone has written, go around the group. Each person shares what they wrote. The group listens. No fixing. No advising. Just witness.

After everyone has shared, reflect on this together:

GROUP REFLECTION

Moses brought the bitterness to God rather than feeding it himself. What does it look like practically for each of you to bring what you are carrying to God — rather than rehearsing it, managing it, or justifying it?

STEP 3 GO DEEPER TOGETHER 20–25 minutes

This is the heart of the session. The question below is harder than Step 1. Take 2 minutes of silence before anyone speaks. Let each person sit with it privately first.

When you are ready, go around the group. Each person responds. The group listens fully before anyone else speaks.

If someone is particularly moved by this question — if the Holy Spirit is clearly doing something — let the group stay with that person. Do not rush past a real moment to stay on schedule.

DISCUSS:

What would it mean to release the person you have been holding — not because they deserve it, but because you were made for more than a life tethered to what they did? What is the first step of that release for you — and what has been keeping you from taking it?

THE PERSON OR SITUATION I AM NAMING TODAY:

WHAT RELEASING THIS TO GOD LOOKS LIKE FOR ME SPECIFICALLY:

IF YOU ARE READY — A DECLARATION

You do not have to say this aloud if you are not ready. But if you are — say it to the group:

"I choose to release _____ from the debt of _____ . I am bringing this to God. I am not the judge. I am the forgiven — and I choose to forgive."

Let the group witness it. Say amen. That is what this community is for.

PREPARE TO SHARE

When you return to the main room, your group may be asked to share. Together, decide on one thing — one insight, one moment, one declaration — that represents what happened in your group today.

Complete this sentence as a group: "Forgiveness does not mean _____ — it means _____"

Write it here so you don't lose it:

Our group is taking away: _____

STEP 5 — CLOSING PRAYER 2–3 MINUTES

Designate one person to open in prayer. Then go around the group — each person prays one sentence if they are willing. No one is required. No one is skipped over without grace.

Suggested focus: Pray the Memory Anchor back to God as a declaration over your own life. Ask Him specifically to meet the person you named today — the one you are releasing.

One person closes the prayer when the group is ready.