

Forgiveness

Receive it. Release it.

LISTEN & WATCH www.BTLdiscipleship.guide/forgiveness [QR code]

BIG IDEA	Forgiven people forgive. We receive God's mercy for our sin, and we release others from the debt they owe us.
MEMORY VERSE	<i>Bear with one another and forgive any complaint you may have against someone else. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.</i> Colossians 3:13
ACTION STEP	Write a forgiveness prayer for one person, then pray a blessing over them every day this week.
OUTCOME	I've received God's forgiveness and begun releasing someone who hurt me.

The Way of Jesus Read before you meet • about 5 minutes

Start by receiving

Forgiveness begins with God's forgiveness of us. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Confession isn't groveling. It's agreeing with God about what's true and letting Him wash it clean. Shame says, *Hide*. Jesus says, *Come into the light*.

The debt we're asked to release

Peter asked Jesus how many times he had to forgive. Seven times? Jesus answered, "Not just seven times, but seventy-seven times!" Then He told a story (Matthew 18:21–35). A servant was forgiven a debt he could never repay in a hundred lifetimes. Then he went out and choked a fellow servant over a few months' wages. The point is unmistakable: when we grasp how much we've been forgiven, holding others hostage for far smaller debts makes no sense.

What forgiveness is, and isn't

Forgiveness is NOT...	Forgiveness IS...
Pretending it didn't hurt	Telling the truth about what happened
Excusing or approving what was done	Releasing my right to get even
Forgetting	Handing the person and the hurt to God, the just Judge (Romans 12:19)
Instantly trusting again	A decision, often followed by a process
Staying in a harmful situation	Compatible with healthy boundaries and safety

Forgiveness and reconciliation are different. Forgiveness takes one person. Reconciliation takes two, and it requires honesty and rebuilt trust. You can forgive someone and still keep healthy boundaries. If you are in a situation involving abuse or danger, your safety comes first. Please reach out to a pastor or a professional for help.

A decision and a process

Deep hurts often need forgiving again every time the memory stings. That's okay. Each time, you choose again: *"Jesus, I've handed this to You."* Over time, the feelings often follow the decision. Here is a simple path to walk: **Name it. Confess it. Receive it. Release it.**

When You Meet about 60 minutes

Who leads: The disciple opens in prayer and leads Connect. The discipler leads the rest.

Connect · 10 min

- Is it easier for you to ask for forgiveness or to give it? Why?
- How did your fast go? What did it reveal?

Read · 20–25 min

Read aloud: Matthew 18:21–35 and 1 John 1:5–9

1. Compare the two debts in the story. What is Jesus saying about the size of God's forgiveness?
2. Why do you think the forgiven servant acted the way he did?
3. According to 1 John, what happens when we "walk in the light"?
4. Which step is yours right now: confessing a sin, receiving forgiveness, forgiving someone, or asking someone's forgiveness?

Practice · 15 min

- **Receive.** Take two minutes of silence to confess anything to God. Then read 1 John 1:9 aloud over each other, using their name: *"[Name], if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*
- **Release.** Each privately write the initials of someone you need to forgive and what they did. Pray, aloud or silently: *"Lord, I release ___ for ___. I give You my right to get even. Please bless them."* You don't need to share details.

Pray & Plan · 10 min

- Thank God together for His forgiveness.
- Confirm the person you'll pray a blessing over this week (initials are enough).

For disciplers: Listen more than you speak. If deep wounds, abuse, or trauma come up, thank them for trusting you, pray with them, and connect them with a pastor or counselor.

For groups: Keep the Release step private and silent. Never ask people to share names or details in a group.

Live It This week's action step

Write a forgiveness prayer (or a letter you won't send) for one person. Then pray a blessing over them every day this week (Luke 6:28).

The person I'm releasing (initials) _____

My blessing prayer for them _____

Go deeper (optional): If you have wronged someone, go to them this week and ask forgiveness, with no excuses and no "but" (Matthew 5:23–24).

Pass It On within 48 hours

Tell someone how God's forgiveness has changed you.

Five Days with Jesus 10–15 minutes a day

Use **R³** each day: Read, Reflect, Respond.

☐ Day 1 • Psalm 51:1–12

Pray David's prayer as my own. What do I need God to cleanse?

☐ Day 2 • 1 John 1:5–2:2

What do I need to bring into the light?

☐ Day 3 • Matthew 18:21–35

How much have I been forgiven? Who am I still holding a debt over?

☐ Day 4 • Luke 6:27–36

Pray a specific blessing for someone who has hurt me.

☐ **Day 5 • Genesis 50:15–21**

Joseph said, “What you intended against me for evil, God intended for good.” Where might God bring good from my hurt?

Awareness: Notice the Replay

When an old hurt starts replaying in your mind, don’t rehearse it. Release it: “*Jesus, I’ve handed this to You.*” Keep a quiet count of how often it happens this week, and watch the number.

Ready to Move On?

- ☐ I’ve confessed my sin and received God’s forgiveness.
- ☐ I’ve begun releasing one person.
- ☐ I understand the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation.

When you and your discipler agree these are true, move on to the next session. If not, take another week. That’s growth too.

Sources & Acknowledgment

The original pathway

This booklet adapts and substantially rewrites material from *Discipleship Pathway* (2024) by Rev. Megan Koch and Rev. Phil Wiseman of Table Church in Des Moines, Iowa, used with the authors' blessing. The original identifies its license as Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

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The Colonial adaptation

Prepared for Colonial Presbyterian Church by Pastor Jeff Sparks for the Be the L.I.G.H.T. Discipleship Pathway. This adaptation keeps the original ten lesson themes; adds a Launch session with a gospel foundation and a Commissioning session with a multiplication plan; restructures each lesson around a weekly meeting, one action step, and a five-day reading plan; and draws on Colonial's *Be the LIGHT Abide Guide* (P.R.A.Y., R³, BLESS, and the Abide Plan), earlier micro-course drafts, and Kent Mathews' evangelism training at Colonial (listening, validating, clarifying, and "know, tell, do, and be the story").

Also informed by

Zúme Training (the Model, Assist, Watch, Leave pattern and the emphasis on obeying and sharing between sessions); *Rooted* by Mariners Church (short daily readings and shared experiences); and *Practicing the Way* by John Mark Comer (one practice at a time, and a rule of life).

Quotations

John Mark Comer, *Live No Lies* (2021). Dallas Willard, on "pitching its message too low." Henri Nouwen, on downward mobility. Robert Louis Stevenson (attributed), on seeds and harvest. The *Didache* (early Christian teaching, 1st–2nd century), on weekly fasting.

Scripture

Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), which is in the public domain. Read the full passages in any trustworthy translation or audio Bible.

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