

GUIDED *to the* CROSS



Session 1
GUIDED TO FORGIVENESS



Session 2
GUIDED TO HOPE



Session 3
GUIDED TO LOVE



Session 4
GUIDED TO PEACE



Session 5
GUIDED TO TRUST



Session 6
GUIDED TO PERSEVERANCE



A 6-SESSION **BIBLE STUDY**
FOR LENT

LEADER'S GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

FOR THE WORD OF THE CROSS IS FOLLY TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, BUT TO US WHO ARE BEING SAVED IT IS THE POWER OF GOD (1 Corinthians 1:18). The cross is the central focus of the season of Lent. It is not just a symbol to us as Christians, but it is a driving force that pulls us closer to Christ and motivates us to journey forward in our faith. In this world where we can be guided by so many other distractions, it is important to remember that the cross is the only place where we can truly find our source of forgiveness, hope, love, peace, trust and perseverance. Let the cross be your guide through this Bible study.

Leader's Guide For Session 1

BEFORE CLASS: Read through this session yourself. Examine the Bible readings listed, and become acquainted with them.

READ: Have a member of the group read the Introduction on page 4 aloud.

READ: Have someone read the Opening Prayer, or read the prayer in unison.

DISCUSS: Discuss times when you have said "I'm sorry" and then received forgiveness.

READ: Read aloud, or have someone read aloud, the Introduction.

SESSION 1



Guided to Forgiveness

*He has delivered us from the domain of darkness
and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

COLOSSIANS 1:13-14

OPENING PRAYER

O Christ, guide us to your cross and to the forgiveness of sins we find there. Only through your sacrifice on the cross are our sins forgiven. Help us to remember to come to you confessing this Lent, so that we may be refreshed and renewed by your grace to forgive others as you have forgiven us. Amen.

DISCUSSION

When was the last time you said, "I'm sorry" to someone? What does it feel like to receive forgiveness?

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world that is not very forgiving. Instead of remembering that the Lord said "Vengeance is mine," people more often than not feel

that vengeance is theirs, and they must punish whoever has wronged them in some way. Our overabundance of lawsuits these days bears that out. But we as Christians are called by our Lord and Savior, Jesus, to be first and foremost a forgiving people. Jesus at so many moments in his ministry explains that we should be as forgiving to others as he has been to us. How forgiving is that? Completely forgiving with no conditions or amendments. No matter what we have done, Christ forgave us on the cross. Now it is our turn to be just as fully forgiving.

THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

1. **Read Matthew 18:21-35.** Why do you think Peter was asking about how often to forgive someone? What does Jesus' initial answer indicate?
2. Why do you think Jesus chose to tell the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant at that particular moment?
3. What is the servant's plea to the king? Can we relate?
4. Why is the king's forgiveness toward the servant significant?
5. What is the meaning behind the fellow servant's debt?
6. What is the fellow servant's plea?
7. Why do you think the unforgiving servant is so angry?
8. What happens to those who do not forgive?
9. What is Jesus' overall point in this parable?

TURN THE OTHER CHEEK

1. **Read Matthew 5:38-40.** How are Jesus' suggestions here counter to human nature?
2. What does forgiveness require of the forgiver?
3. How do you think the wrongdoer in these scenarios would respond?
4. How does forgiveness change relationships?

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The Unforgiving Servant

1. **Read Matthew 18:21-35.** Answers may vary, but may include that Peter may have thought that there surely was a limit to forgiveness. Jesus' answer indicates that there is no limit to the number of times we should forgive someone.
2. Answers may vary, but may include that Jesus told this parable at this moment to reinforce the message he was sending to always forgive and to give people a more tangible story to understand better what he meant.
3. The servant's plea is, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." We, too, seek patience from our God for our sinfulness.
4. The king's forgiveness is significant because the amount of the servant's debt is equivalent to millions of dollars today.
5. The fellow servant's debt would equate to a few thousand dollars today—a substantial amount but still nowhere near the amount the first servant had owed the king.
6. The fellow servant's plea is the same as the first servant's: "Have patience with me, and I will pay you."

7. Perhaps the unforgiving servant is so angry because he is nervous about his own debt, or he is angry at himself for having debt, and he is projecting that anger onto his fellow servant.
8. They are punished.
9. Jesus' point is that we should be as extravagantly generous in our forgiveness toward others as God is in his forgiveness toward us.

Turn the Other Cheek

1. **Read Matthew 5:38-40.** Our human nature is to want to fight back when we are struck, to return evil for evil.
2. It requires love and compassion, humility and generosity.
3. Answers may vary but may include that the wrongdoer might be shocked or taken aback or moved to stop being angry.
4. It can change people from adversaries to friends.

Father, Forgive Them

1. **Read Luke 23:32-38.** Jesus' first words from the cross are "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This is significant because it shows that Jesus is not angry at his tormentors, but loves them.
2. From this and other gospels, we know that those around the cross were Roman soldiers, chief priests, scribes and angry crowds. They were mocking Jesus and gambling for his clothes after nailing him to the cross.
3. "They know not what they do" reminds us that the good we want to do, we do not do, and the evil we do not want to do, we do, as Paul tells us. The sin within us often makes us do things our minds do not fully understand.

4. We know that it is our sins that put Jesus on the cross, but in the moment of our sinning, we can so often be unaware of the harm we are doing.
5. **Read Romans 7:24-25a.** We are so wretched because of sin within us, which leads to death. Our Lord Jesus Christ frees us from this wretchedness.

READ: Read the Psalm responsively.

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM

1. **Read Luke 23:32-38.** What are Jesus' first words from the cross? Why is that important?
2. Who were those in need of forgiving around the cross? What were they doing?
3. **Read Romans 7:15-20.** How do these verses help us understand what Jesus is talking about when he says, "They know not what they do" (Luke 23:34)?
4. Why does it feel that Jesus is praying for us in this moment, too?
5. **Read Romans 7:24-25a.** Why are we so wretched? Who can free us from our wretchedness?

RESPONSIVE READING—PSALM 51:7-12

L Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
C wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

L Let me hear joy and gladness;
C let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

L Hide your face from my sins,
C and blot out all my iniquities.

L Create in me a clean heart, O God,
C and renew a right spirit within me.

L Cast me not away from your presence,
C and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

L Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
C and uphold me with a willing spirit.

HYMN

Just As I Am

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

CLOSING PRAYER

Forgiving Jesus, thank you for remembering us from the cross and granting us pardon from our sins. Let us live a life of forgiveness in our interactions with others, and let us be humble in our receiving of forgiveness when we have wronged someone else. May the cross serve as a constant reminder to us this Lent that we receive forgiveness only through the blood of Christ. Amen.

GUIDED TO ACTION

Memorize Ephesians 4:32 (below), and say it to yourself every day this week as you live these words out in your life.

*Be kind to one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving
one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.*

SING: Sing (or speak) the hymn in unison.

PRAY: Pray aloud, or have someone read aloud, the Closing Prayer.

GUIDED TO ACTION: Encourage participants to memorize Ephesians 4:32 and live that verse out this week.



GUIDED *to the* CROSS



The Leader's Guide for this Bible study for Lent guides us to the cross of Christ. In-depth Scripture readings draw participants to the forgiveness, hope, love, peace, trust and perseverance found at Calvary. Study and discussion questions, prayers and reflections help to give a better understanding of the richness of Christ's sacrifice. This large-format Leader's Guide includes all answers, helpful notes and session directions.

