



# Small Group Discussion Guide: Week 1: Power of Forgiveness

## Introduction:

As we enter into the Easter season we put our attention on the cross and the empty tomb. This new series focuses on the final words Jesus spoke during the crucifixion. Jesus spoke seven times from the cross, they were His last words. In these final words we have a summary of the extraordinary character of Jesus and of God's plan for humankind. We will dive into the Gospels to examine what Jesus' final words were.

The first saying from the cross is somewhat shocking. Jesus was put on trial, he was mocked, made fun of, beaten, stripped naked, betrayed by his closest friends, and then condemned to death on the cross. He has basically been silent up until this point, He cries out as he is hanging on the cross, "*Father, Forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.*" I mean you would think that he would have defended himself, or cast judgement on them, but in an act of mercy, he asked the Father to forgive those who did this. (read [Luke 23:32-43](#))

Today we will look at the **Power of Forgiveness**, and how forgiveness can be freeing. Forgiveness transforms anger and hurt into healing and peace. Forgiveness can help you overcome feelings of depression, anxiety, and rage. It is about making the conscious decision to let go of a grudge, or a wrong done to you. It is about setting yourself free so that you can move forward in your own life.

**(Leader Insight)** Crucifixion was a slow death, intended to inflict the most pain and suffering as possible. The victim would carry a cross beam of the cross on their backs, and then would be nailed to it using 5-7” spikes. They were driven through the wrists so that they could hold the full weight of the slumping body. The feet were then nailed to post of the cross with the knees bent so the victim could push up with his feet and legs to breath. Crucifixion was one of most agonizing ways to be put to death. The most extreme word in the English language to describe this kind of pain is the word excruciating, which comes from the Latin word *excruciatius* which means “out of the cross”.

**Read: Ephesians 4:17-32**

We will apply the **H.E.A.R** method of Bible study for this series.

- **Highlight:** Read and observe everything in the passage(s).
- **Explain:** Based on your reading, discover what the passage means in its context.
- **Apply:** Understand how the meaning of the passage affects your life.
- **Respond in Prayer:** Pray God’s word back to him, asking to believe, share, and put the Bible into practice in your life and relationships.

## Discussion Questions

### Highlight

Question 1: What is Paul trying to convey in this text?

Question 2: What are some things you notice from this passage? What is the context in which this is taking place?

Question 3: What do you notice as the theme for these verses?

### Explain

Question 4: In verses 17-19, who is Paul talking about? Who does “they” refer too?

Question 5: What are the results of walking in the “futility of their minds”?

Question 6: In verses 20-24, Paul urges Christians to live with a different manner and mindset. What are some of these things he lists in the text? Compare the differences of those who walk in their old self to those with the new self"

**(Leader Insight)** Laying aside the "old self" is extremely hard for us to do. Paul's reference to the old self is consistent with his other letters he wrote. The old self is your old way of thinking and how you used to respond in life when things didn't go your way. The "old self" is the unconverted nature, described as being corrupted by the lust of deceit and wickedness. God is offering us a new way of living with a renewed mind. (Romans 12:1-2)

Question 7: In verses 25-32, we are given a picture of what it looks like to walk in the "new self". What from this list sticks out to you?

Question 8: How does one put on the "new self" and walk with a "renewed mind"?

Question 9: How does this type of living allow you to exercise forgiveness towards those who have wronged you?

Question 10: Why is it important for you to forgive other people, even if they don't ask you for it?

Question 11: Discuss what makes it difficult for us to forgive. Why is this difficult for us?

Question 12: Think about what God did for you in the gospel, how should this compel us to forgive people?

[Read Romans 5:8](#) " But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Question 13: How did God demonstrate forgiveness to us from this verse?

Question 14: How does walking with God in a relationship help change your actions and attitudes?

## Apply

Question 15: Describe what forgiving others does for you and for them?

Question 16: Where is God showing you that you need to forgive? Who is God asking you to forgive?

Question 17: Describe a time when you have forgiven someone. How did this make you feel? What changed in you as a result of forgiveness?

Question 18: Do you need to forgive yourself for something that you have done? 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. How does this verse give you encouragement for forgiving yourself?

## Respond in Prayer

**Next Steps- Leaders Say:** God may have brought up some old bitterness and unforgiveness you may be walking around with. If so, the question is, are you going to push it back under the rug or deal with it so you can move forward in your journey? While I understand that you may be saying, “you don’t know the story” or “what they did to me”, and you are right, but God does. Allow him to help you walk through this, and ask him to give strength to put on the new self.” God does not want bitterness and unforgiveness to keep you from experiencing a life of freedom. As you go through this section, ask God to give you the strength to forgive and the power to move into freedom. )

- 1. Share one small “next step” that you feel God is calling you to take in the next 7 days.**
- 2. Pray and Write down the names of those you need to forgive.**
- 3. Write a letter/email to the person who wronged you and then pray what to do with it.** *(sometimes writing down what we would like to say to someone is a great way of releasing bitterness and anger, then throw it away and release them in forgiveness)*
- 4. Journal what God is showing you from this study**
- 5. Share with the group ways you can show forgiveness this week?**

**Pray & Dismiss**