

Forgiveness Study Guide

Key Concepts:

- **Bitterness and Forgiveness:**
 - Bitterness can destroy the heart, while forgiveness brings healing and freedom.
 - **Jesus as the Example:**
 - Jesus modeled perfect forgiveness, forgiving others even before they sought it or deserved it (Romans 5:8).
 - **The Meaning of Forgiveness:**
 - The English word "forgive" combines "fore" (beforehand) and "give" (to impart freely), emphasizing the need to forgive proactively and unconditionally.
 - **Greek Terms for Forgiveness (Strong's numbers in parentheses):**
 - **Charizomai (5483):** To show favor, give freely.
 - **Aphiemi (863):** To send away, leave alone, permit.
 - **Hilaskomai (2433):** To be propitious, make propitiation for.
 - **Apoluo (630):** To set free, release.
 - **Aphesis (859):** Dismissal, release, pardon.
 - **Epikalupto (1943):** To cover over or up.
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Biblical References and Key Insights:

- **Matthew 6:14-15 (NLT):**
 - "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins."
 - **Key Insight:** Forgiving others is not just a suggestion but a condition for receiving God's forgiveness. This verse underscores the seriousness of holding onto unforgiveness, which can block our own access to divine grace.
- **Colossians 3:13 (NKJV):**
 - "Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."

- **Key Insight:** This verse highlights the necessity of forgiveness in the Christian life, rooted in Christ's example. Just as we have received grace, we are called to extend it to others without hesitation.
 - **Luke 23:34 (NLT):**
 - "Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.' And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice."
 - **Key Insight:** Jesus' forgiveness on the cross, offered to those who were actively harming Him, serves as the ultimate example of unconditional forgiveness, demonstrating that forgiveness is an act of love that transcends human understanding.
 - **Acts 7:60 (NLT):**
 - "He fell to his knees, shouting, 'Lord, don't charge them with this sin!' And with that, he died."
 - **Key Insight:** Stephen's final words mirror those of Christ, showing that true forgiveness, even in the face of death, is a hallmark of a Christ-like character. This teaches us the power and importance of forgiving, even in extreme circumstances.
 - **Matthew 18:32-35 (NLT):**
 - The parable of the unforgiving servant, illustrating the importance of showing mercy as we have received mercy.
 - **Key Insight:** This parable starkly illustrates the consequences of failing to forgive. The servant's fate is a warning that our forgiveness from God is contingent upon our willingness to forgive others.
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Practical Applications:

- **Forgive Quickly:**
 - Don't let the sun go down on your anger. Forgive before it's asked for, deserved, or convenient.
- **Focus on Yourself:**
 - Understand that forgiveness is between you and God, not between you and the offender.
- **Let Go of Revenge:**

- Release any desire for revenge or repayment, and be willing to live with the consequences of another's sin.
 - **Prayer:**
 - Pray for those who have wronged you, asking God to bless them and help you forgive fully.
 - **Re-forgive as Needed:**
 - If old feelings of resentment resurface, consciously choose to forgive again.
 - **The Forgiveness Model:**
 - Picture Jesus taking your place in a courtroom, accepting the penalty for your sins—this is how you should forgive others.
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Personal Reflection:

- **Am I Holding Onto Bitterness?**
 - Reflect on any areas where bitterness might be taking root in your heart. How can you address these through forgiveness?
 - **Do I Forgive as Christ Forgives?**
 - Consider whether your forgiveness is conditional or if it mirrors the unconditional forgiveness Christ offers.
 - **Who Do I Need to Forgive Today?**
 - Identify anyone you need to forgive, and take steps to release them from your anger or resentment.
 - **What Does True Forgiveness Look Like for Me?**
 - How can you live out true, biblical forgiveness in your daily life, especially in challenging situations?
 - **Pray:**
 - Ask God for the strength to forgive as He forgives, and to let go of any lingering pain or desire for justice.
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By applying these principles, you can experience the freedom and peace that come from living a life of forgiveness, as Christ has called us to.