

FORGIVE & RELEASE

A 5 Day Devotional Series



LEGACY
STONE

WELCOME!



Every one of us deals with conflict. It's inevitable that we will experience tension and relational strain. But what is one major component that we wrestle when dealing with it? Forgiveness.

In this 5 day devotional, we look at the power of forgiveness and, through the lives of Joseph, David, Peter, Esau, and Jesus, we get a depiction of how it is the true catalyst to freedom, healing, and reconciliation. We also see how it is essential in the life of the believer.

As you journey through the next 5 days, **there are key principles to note.**

1. **Forgiveness is not a “get out of jail free” pass for the offender.** Forgiving a person for a hurt doesn't mean the offense was warranted or simply forgotten. It is freedom for the person who has been hurt.
2. **Forgiveness doesn't always lead to reconciliation.** Reconciliation is possible with repentance and accountability, as well a change in course from the offender. This isn't always possible but forgiveness is Christ's example and one we are called, by faith, to follow. See day 5 in the devotional for more on this.
3. **Forgiveness has generational implications.** Whether it is withheld or given, it will impact those around us. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can learn how to forgive and leave a legacy of healing, restoration, and wholeness so that bitterness, resentment, and shame are not allowed to be passed on. It's not always easy, but it is always worth it.

Devotional Outline

Day 1: What's at Stake? - Leaving a new legacy like Joseph

Day 2: When the Wound is Deep - Forfeiting retaliation like David

Day 3: Forgiveness after Failure - Restored to wholeness like Peter

Day 4: Family Wounds Hurt Most - Reconciling after time like Esau

Day 5: Forgiveness that Sets the World Free - Choosing to love like Jesus

Over the course of this devotional, may you see the heart of the gospel and experience the release that comes with forgiveness. After each devotional, you will find a reflection prompt and a prayer to go deeper with the content and in your intimacy with the Lord.

Even in the most challenging of circumstances you face, may you come to know that God's heart is for you and freedom and healing are always possible. **Forgiveness is the release.**

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." – Colossians 3:13 NIV

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." – Genesis 50:20 NIV

Betrayal, abandonment, slavery, false accusation, imprisonment, and delay. These words marked the life of a man once favored and highly esteemed as a young boy. For 13 years, he lived in a place where trial and hardship seemed like his only lot in life at the hands of his brothers, who devalued him out of sheer jealousy and sold him into slavery. Yet, the very conditions this man found himself in were the exact conditions needed to cultivate the heart of the leader he was destined to be and led to the redemption of countless people.

Joseph had every reason not to forgive. While we often like to focus on him being the boy with the coat of many colors, we can easily overlook the level of hurt and pain he endured as he navigated life after being sold by his siblings. As his story unfolds in Genesis 37–50, we see the once-prized son navigate test after test, eventually elevated to second in command and placed in a position to choose forgiveness or punishment.

In an instant, grace is released when retaliation and vengeance would've been the easier and more appropriate choices. Grace covered a multitude of sins and forged a new legacy of redemption out of a generational pattern of deception, rivalry, and revenge. Without forgiveness, the cycle of broken family dynamics could have continued for generations.

While forgiveness can be one of the most difficult things a person can do, it is also the catalyst to freedom and redemption. It can set a new trajectory, not just for the forgiver but for many lives. Although reconciliation may not be possible based on the severity of the wound, we should fight to find the ability to forgive. Withholding forgiveness is a prison for the wronged, not the accused. Releasing it doesn't mean it no longer matters—it simply means you aren't holding to the trauma any longer.

Joseph could have remained emotionally imprisoned by the trauma of betrayal. His decision to forgive allowed him to walk in emotional and spiritual freedom, live purposefully, and fulfill God's call. Holding onto resentment could've twisted his legacy into vengeance rather than mercy. Not only did his legacy lead to the line of the coming Messiah through Judah (Genesis 49:10), but it foreshadowed the grace and mercy Jesus would extend to us.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

So what's at stake if we choose not to forgive? We risk being chained to pain and losing the opportunity for healing. We may forge a legacy of hurt and resentment passed down to future generations. Or we could shortchange the grace and transformational work of Jesus by not allowing Him full access to our cracked and broken areas. Without forgiveness, Christ-likeness is impossible.

Forgiveness is not a free pass to the person who inflicted the pain, but rather a trust in God that as we release it, He heals us and deals with the sin on our behalf so we can stand as Joseph and say, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good..." As we release forgiveness, we invite new words to be our story: redeemed, healed, restored, favored, reconciled, and purpose-driven. Forgiveness is never just about the past—it's about protecting the future God has for you and those connected to you.

Would we be people who, like Jesus, say, "Father forgive them..." (Luke 23:34) and trust that surrendering the hurt will bring greater restoration beyond our imagination?

REFLECTION

- **Think Future** - What's an area of your life that you would like to see restoration in as it pertains to generational impact from forgiveness?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord, help me see beyond the pain of the past and into the purpose You want to bring through it. Give me a heart like Joseph's that trusts You enough to forgive and strong enough to walk in freedom. Use my healing to bring healing to others. In Jesus' name, amen.

WHEN THE WOUND IS DEEP

"This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the Lord's anointed.' See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you." - 1 Samuel 24:10-12 NIV

"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord." - Romans 12:19 NIV

"Revenge is sweet," or so the saying goes. This proverb dates back to the 16th century. However, when we look at scripture and see evidence of the opposite being valid, we understand why God says that vengeance is His (Romans 12:19). Instead, what we are asked of by the Lord is to forgive as Christ forgave us. Mercy was shown instead of judgment by the King of Kings, who hung in utter agony as the wrath of God burned against Him for our sake, as He begged for forgiveness for us. Christ is who we follow in example after.

While Jesus set the standard, another person of note in scripture who resembled God's grace was King David. David had every reason to retaliate and take matters into his own hands. Saul, the very king he had faithfully served, pursued him out of jealousy and tried to kill him on multiple occasions. His desire to kill David was relentless, resulting in others being killed out of the jealousy that consumed Saul. Yet even when David had the opportunity to take Saul's life, he didn't. He spared him—choosing reverence for God over revenge for his enemy.

David teaches us that forgiveness often involves releasing justice into God's hands. Forgiveness doesn't mean the offender was correct; it means that we trust God to make things right. When we're deeply wounded by those in authority or those we once trusted, forgiveness becomes a holy surrender—a statement that our hearts refuse to be ruled by bitterness. Even if the offender chooses never to ask forgiveness, show remorse or repentance, or take any accountability, we can still choose to forgive them with the Lord as our defender. Forgiveness will be between you and the Lord.

We can submit this wrong to God as David did. Fighting our urges to retaliate or be right, we trust that God will avenge the wrongs for us. One way to begin to move forward in the process of forgiveness is to ask Jesus to help our hearts to let go of the pain of the offense for our own freedom. Then, as time progresses, we can begin to pray for the offender and extend Mercy from our own hands. This allows us to leave final judgments up to God.

WHEN THE WOUND IS DEEP

Forgiveness requires radical faith. It requires submission. It requires trust. It will need grace and mercy when anger and bitterness are fighting for the throne of your heart and mind. It may even feel excruciating to extend, especially when revenge seems sweet for the taking. But forgiveness also helps purify our hearts before the Lord. It helps keep us holy and blameless without the stain of retaliation. Like David, it allows us to remain men and women after God's heart.

REFLECTION

- Is there someone you need to release to God, trusting Him to deal with the injustice?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, search my heart and find areas where forgiveness has not been extended. Help me release any bitterness or resentment toward those I have trusted and who have wounded me deeply, even if they have not sought reconciliation or admitted fault. Let me learn to hand the offense to you, for you to judge and deal with so that I may walk blameless and free. As I release forgiveness, bring me healing and fill me with your love to keep walking out the grace you have given me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

FORGIVENESS AFTER FAILURE

"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.' Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.' The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.' - John 21:15-17 NIV

"The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly." - Luke 22:61-62 NIV

Three. These were the number of times Peter denied Jesus. After walking closely with Him, vowing loyalty, and even drawing a sword for Him—Peter still failed. Yet after the resurrection, Jesus doesn't shame him. Instead, Jesus invites Peter into restoration with the simple, repeated question: "Do you love Me?"

The thing about forgiveness is that it isn't just something we give to others—it's something we need to receive ourselves. We can't extend grace until we've experienced it. Jesus forgave Peter not to erase his past but to empower his future. Often, we can look at forgiveness as "the other person's gift," but some of our most powerfully transformative moments are when we can forgive ourselves and receive God's forgiveness.

Jesus didn't keep holding the failure over Peter's head, creating shame and guilt. He didn't repeat the wrong over and over. His attempt at asking the questions was to reorient Peter to who Jesus knew him to be: one of his disciples - chosen, hand-picked, and dearly loved. Jesus already knew Peter loved Him. He used the opportunity to question the disciple to restore Peter's faith by getting him to publicly reaffirm his love and loyalty and overwrite the three public denials. He was giving Peter a second chance. Jesus reoriented the heartbroken disciple to whom Peter was called to be: the builder of His church.

Peter, filled with sorrow and shame at his shortcomings, didn't see it possible to be considered a disciple anymore. Sometimes, the enemy's tactic after our shortcomings is to deceive us into believing that we are too far gone for God ever to use us or forgive us. But a broken and contrite heart, the Lord will not despise (Psalm 51:17). The same loving kindness that Jesus showed Peter is the same that leads us to repentance when we have found ourselves far off and missing the mark.

FORGIVENESS AFTER FAILURE

God has never once asked for perfection from His saints. But He does ask us to love Him, to follow Jesus, and to be made into His likeness, which will, one day, result in perfection when we are reunited with Him. Until then, we are asked for surrender, obedience, faith, submission, and devotion. When we fall short, the way forward is not by retreating from God but by running as hard and fast toward Him and repenting from the thing that veered us away from Him. It's in the return to Christ that restoration and redemption can be found.

Perhaps, like Peter, you have hurt someone you loved and caused pain and suffering for them and yourself. The first step is not to run and hide in shame but to move toward admittance and accountability. The second is to ask for forgiveness. The third is to forgive yourself and move forward with a change of heart and behavior --- this is how we move into maturity in Christ and allow love to cover a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).

Our failings don't discount us from God's plan. Instead, when we surrender them to Him and allow Him to speak to the broken areas of our lives - our faults, failures, points of shame, pain, and hang-ups, He can use them to bring forth healing and ultimately advance His kingdom. But we first need to start by admitting our shortcomings. Then, by grace, we receive His love and forgiveness and begin walking out that new freedom and proclaiming the gospel. Because forgiveness is good news.

REFLECTION

- Is there a place where you need to receive God's forgiveness for yourself so that you can walk freely again?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank You for never deeming me too far gone when I have fallen short. Please help me not to run in shame when I sin, but rather help me to sprint back to You so that You may correct and restore. Forgive me for the ways I have hurt others and hurt You. Please help me forgive myself and receive forgiveness from You as I seek restoration and change my course moving forward. May this enable me to walk in wholeness and freedom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

FAMILY WOUNDS HURT MOST

"Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept."
- Genesis 33:1-4 NIV

"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." - Hebrews 12:14-15 NIV

"Blood is thicker than water," so the old proverb goes. It's no wonder that wounds from those in your family are often the worst. When brothers betray one another, it can leave them scarred for years. Jacob had stolen everything from Esau—his birthright, blessing, and trust. Esau's future legacy was traded for some stew and lost by dishonest means (Genesis 25:29-34). It would lead to Esau holding grudges, carrying anger, and plotting murder.

Family wounds can be the deepest. They often carry layers of disappointment, betrayal, and time. We all have stories we can tell about moments of heartbreak at the hands of a family member or two. Depending on the severity of the hurt, the impact can extend beyond just a moment and into an entire lifetime of resentment. If left undealt with, we can find it trickling into future generations. However, Esau's example shows forgiveness can heal even the most fractured relationships. When the two brothers meet again years later, Esau runs to embrace Jacob with tears—no vengeance, no retaliation—just reconciliation.

Genesis 27 to Genesis 33 is approximately a 20-year gap from when Jacob stole Esau's blessing until Esau chose peace over payback. We don't know what happened with Esau during this period that led him to a place of forgiveness, as scripture doesn't tell us when the shift occurred, but we know it did. Regardless of what transpired when the brothers were apart, we know that God had a hand in stirring up a desire for reconciliation and forgiveness.

We see both brothers meet again with very different perspectives and heart postures, proving that there is potential for reconciliation, even after conflict, when both parties change hearts and actions. However, this isn't something that is just going to happen. Healing and reconciliation must be actively sought after, humbly walked out, and earnestly kept. The beautiful thing is that it can mirror the gospel through the extension of grace and refining that leads to holiness.

FAMILY WOUNDS HURT MOST

Some of the hardest things to forgive are the wounds from the family. Not only do they cut the deepest, but they are also intertwined with our very identity and linked to our history. They will cause tears in the fabric of our hearts and cause what should be a place of safety to feel like a place to escape from. Esau took 20 years before reconciliation was on the table for him and Jacob.

While time doesn't heal all things as people often say, we can see that time softened Esau's heart in this case. Maybe wealth and success brought perspective, and he found a way forward without the original blessing. Perhaps he got tired of carrying a wound that no longer served him. But what's clear is this: Esau chose freedom over bitterness. He didn't just forgive Jacob—he chose freedom for himself.

Like Esau, extending forgiveness isn't an excuse for what occurred but an opportunity to refuse to let the past own or define you. Even without reconciliation, forgiveness is still a reclamation of peace for the forgiver. Before fully releasing an offense, the first step is to check for bitter roots and allow God to move in your heart. He will guide you in wisdom for the next steps as you choose forgiveness and, if possible, guide you in reconciliation with that family member.

REFLECTION

- Are you carrying unspoken pain from a family relationship that God is asking you to release?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, family pain is complex and personal. You see every wound and every weight I carry. Help me surrender my right to revenge and choose the healing that comes with forgiveness. Give me the courage to step toward peace, even if reconciliation is impossible. Free my heart, God, as I release this to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

FORGIVENESS THAT SETS THE WORLD FREE

"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' And they divided up his clothes by casting lots." - Luke 23:34 NIV

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." - Ephesians 4:32 NIV

As Jesus hung on the cross—mocked, beaten, abandoned—He didn't lash out. He didn't call all of heaven's angel armies down to destroy those persecuting and crucifying Him, even though He had the power and authority to do so. Jesus didn't curse His enemies. He did not choose retaliation for the pain and agony He was in. He prayed, "Father, forgive them..." In that moment, He modeled the kind of forgiveness that would become the heartbeat of the gospel. The forgiveness extended to you and me—the ones He came to die for.

Forgiveness isn't natural—it's supernatural. It's a decision empowered by grace. We see that in Christ's example. In the moments when suffering and sorrow cry out for relief through retaliation, God asks us to follow His Son's model of holy surrender. Trusting that God will take our pain and purposefully redeem it for a better ending ultimately enables us to allow the gospel to work in our lives. When we forgive, we reflect the very character of Christ. And in doing so, we release others, and ourselves, into healing and wholeness.

Jesus beautifully depicted the depth of His love for humanity in His death, and He shared the heart of His Father when He chose mercy and compassion despite the excruciating pain. Although He was perfect and without sin, He was still fully man with all the emotions and pains of human existence. His power at that moment was in His resolve to finish the work He came for. His mission: bring forgiveness and reconciliation to a hurting, sin-filled, broken world so we could be one with Him again. His forgiveness set the world free.

He bridged the gap and gave us the ability, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to do the same. To live like Him, reflect Him, and be transformed more and more into His likeness. God's heart has always been for forgiveness and mercy, not judgment. Whether or not the offender chooses repentance and reconciliation is something else. But regardless, we have a good and loving Savior who helps us learn to forgive as He did so that freedom becomes attainable.

FORGIVENESS THAT SETS THE WORLD FREE

REFLECTION

- What's one area you feel led by God to release forgiveness in? How can you reflect Christ in that decision?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Jesus, thank You for the forgiveness You gave on the cross. You chose mercy in the face of pain, surrender in the face of suffering, and love in the face of hate. Help me to follow Your example and forgive even when it's hard.

Holy Spirit, empower me to release what I cannot carry. Heal the places wounded by bitterness and fill them with Your peace. Teach me to reflect Your heart—to be kind, compassionate, and free.

Heavenly Father, I surrender the offense, the pain, and the weight. I trust You with justice and with healing. Thank You for setting me free. Help me live released and lead others into that same freedom. In Jesus' name, amen.

MEANT FOR RESTORATION

Now that you have made it through this little devotional series, keep moving forward in your journey to reconciliation. A few potential steps you can take:

- Go through this devotional with a friend or another trusted person to help you learn and identify your own blindspots.
- Write down your key reflections and identify what areas of your life may need to change.
- Choose an intentional way you will pray over the conflict in your life and reframe your attitude about the situation.
- Seek godly counsel if needed to help you make progress on the situations.

There always is a path forward, even if it may look different or not in the timing you expected. Stay committed to growth and honoring God. Ultimately, navigating conflict is what it looks like to model the gospel so embrace that opportunity.

WANT MORE RESOURCES?

Visit legacystone.com/resources and look for our section on conflict and communication to find practical tools and insights to help you in this process.