



clean slate

Study Guide - Week 2

Sermon Recap

Josh emphasized that at the heart of beginning the year with a clean slate is recognizing our identity as sinners and the profound nature of our sin. He explained that everyone's sins separate us from God's glory, highlighting that God's standards are far higher than human standards and emphasizing the need for divine rescue rather than self-help. Through strong biblical examples, Josh illustrated that while we deserve judgment, God offers us grace through Jesus Christ, who died for our sins. Ultimately, he called for believers to identify and forgive those who have wronged them, as we forgive because we have first been forgiven by God.

Ice Breaker

If you could have any animal as your personal assistant for a day, which animal would you choose, and what tasks would you make them do?

Discussion Questions

▼ Josh explained that we are all sinners and that this term means we've 'missed the mark' set by God, emphasizing that no one can claim they are good without acknowledging their faults.

- How does understanding this impact our view of ourselves and others?
- Think about a time when you judged someone for their mistakes. How can recognizing your own faults change the way you view others?

▼ Josh discussed that grace is 'undeserved favor' and cannot be earned or deserved; if you think you deserve grace, it ceases to be grace.

- How does the concept of grace differ from the idea of earning forgiveness?
- Can you recall a moment in your life where you experienced grace? How did that change your perspective on forgiveness?

Activity

1) Have you ever done something you knew was wrong, even if it seemed minor at the time? (*James 4:17*)

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES OFTEN ALWAYS

2) Do you entertain thoughts that you would be ashamed to share with others? (*Matthew 5:28*)

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES OFTEN ALWAYS

3) Do you believe that all humans, including yourself, are prone to sin? (*Romans 3:23*)

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES OFTEN ALWAYS

4) Can you recall instances where you've failed to do the good you intended to do? (*Romans 7:19*)

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES OFTEN ALWAYS

5) Have you ever performed good deeds with selfish motives or for personal gain? (*Matthew 6:1*)

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES OFTEN ALWAYS

6) Do you consider yourself morally superior to others? (*Luke 18:11-12*)

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES OFTEN ALWAYS

7) Have you ever experienced the consequences of a sinful decision? (*Galatians 6:7*)

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES OFTEN ALWAYS

8) Do you feel like you have full control of the sin in your life? (*1 John 1:8*)

NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES OFTEN ALWAYS

Read Scripture

Romans 3:21-26 NIV

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in [\[b\]](#) Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, [\[u\]](#) through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Discussion Questions

▼ According to Romans 3:23, 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.' Josh highlighted that everyone has sinned and that understanding our missing the mark pushes us to seek growth and a clean slate.

- What are some practical ways we can recognize our shortcomings and strive for growth?
- What areas in your life do you think you need to improve? How can acknowledging your shortcomings help you make positive changes?

Read Scripture

Matthew 18:21-35 NIV

²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

²² Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.^[9]

²³ “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold^[u] was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶ “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ ²⁷ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸ “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.^[u] He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

²⁹ “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

³⁰ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

³² “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ ³⁴ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵ “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Discussion Questions

▼ Matthew 18 talks about the parable where a servant who was forgiven a massive debt refused to forgive a small debt owed to him.

- What does the parable that Jesus told about forgiveness teach us about the importance of forgiving others?
- Who in your life do you struggle to forgive? How can this parable help you take a step toward forgiveness?

▼ Josh explained that baptism is central to our faith and wipes our slate clean.

- What role does baptism play in understanding our identity as forgiven people?
- Have you been baptized or considered it? How do you feel your identity would change if you fully embraced being forgiven in Christ?

Prayer 🙏

- Ask God to help us apply the message of grace to our lives this week.
- Pray for the courage to forgive those who have wronged us.
- Ask for peace in our hearts as we seek to follow Jesus' example.
- Remember to lift up any prayer requests shared within the group.

Rewatch the sermon 📺

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Bible Reading Plan - Week 2

Day 1

Romans 3:1-31

This passage reminds us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, yet we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. This chapter underscores humanity's universal need for forgiveness and God's provision of it through faith in Jesus.

Forgiveness is not earned by our good works but is a gift of God's grace, made possible through the sacrifice of Christ. God's justice and mercy meet at the cross, where He forgives our sins without compromising His righteousness. This truth humbles us, reminding us that we are all equally in need of His grace. It also challenges us to forgive others, as we have been forgiven, recognizing that no one is beyond the reach of God's mercy. How does understanding God's forgiveness shape the way you approach others who have wronged you? As we embrace His grace, we are called to reflect it in our relationships, living as people who know the transforming power of forgiveness.

- How does recognizing that forgiveness is a gift of grace, not something earned, change the way you view your own need for forgiveness?
- In what ways can reflecting on the depth of God's mercy help you extend forgiveness to others, even when it feels undeserved?
- Are there areas in your life where you struggle to forgive yourself or others, and how can you surrender those struggles to God's grace?

- Ask God to help you fully embrace the gift of His forgiveness and to give you a heart that reflects His mercy, enabling you to forgive others and live in the freedom of His grace.

Day 2

Ephesians 2:1-22

This passage reminds us that we were once dead in our sins, separated from God and deserving of His wrath. Yet, in His great love, God made us alive with Christ, saving us by His grace through faith. This passage highlights the incredible forgiveness God has given us—not because of anything we've done, but as a gift of His mercy. Through the cross, Christ has broken down the barriers of hostility, reconciling us to God and to one another. This forgiveness transforms our identity, making us members of God's household and citizens of His kingdom. It also calls us to reflect His grace in our relationships, forgiving as we've been forgiven. Are there areas in your life where you need to allow God's forgiveness to flow through you to others? Forgiveness is both a gift we receive and a practice we extend, bringing healing and unity. As we reflect on God's incredible mercy, we are reminded that His forgiveness is a foundation of our new life in Christ. Let this truth lead you to live in gratitude and extend grace freely.

- How does recognizing that forgiveness is a gift of grace shape the way you respond to those who have wronged you?
- Are there barriers of hostility in your life that God is calling you to break down through forgiveness and reconciliation?
- In what ways can living as a forgiven and reconciled child of God impact your relationships and daily interactions with others?
- Ask God to help you fully embrace the depth of His forgiveness and to empower you to extend His grace to others, breaking down walls of hostility and fostering peace and unity in your relationships.

Day 3

Luke 19:1-10

This passage tells the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector despised for his greed and dishonesty, yet eager to see Jesus. When Jesus calls Zacchaeus down from the tree and chooses to stay at his house, it is a powerful act of grace and forgiveness. This encounter transforms Zacchaeus, leading him to repent and make amends for his wrongs. Jesus declares that salvation has come to his house, affirming that even those deemed unworthy by society are not beyond God's forgiveness. This story reminds us that forgiveness is a catalyst for change, inviting us to turn from our sin and embrace a new life in Christ. Like Zacchaeus, we are all sinners in need of grace, and Jesus meets us where we are with love and acceptance. Are there areas in your life where you need to experience or extend forgiveness? God's forgiveness is not just about wiping away our sin but also about empowering us to live differently. As recipients of His grace, we are called to reflect His forgiveness in our actions and relationships. 'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'

- How does Zacchaeus's response to Jesus's forgiveness challenge the way you think about repentance and making amends?
- Are there people in your life you've written off as unworthy of forgiveness, and how might Jesus's example in this story inspire you to see them differently?
- What steps can you take to reflect the forgiveness and grace you've received from Christ in your relationships and daily life?
- Ask God to help you fully embrace His forgiveness and to give you the courage to extend grace to others, living a life that reflects the transformation His love brings.

Day 4

Romans 5:1-21

This passage reveals the depth of God's love and forgiveness, reminding us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. This unearned gift demonstrates the incredible grace of God, who offers reconciliation to a broken and rebellious world. Through Christ's sacrifice, we are justified and no longer stand condemned, but instead are at peace with God. Paul emphasizes that this forgiveness was given while we were powerless to save ourselves, underscoring that it is a gift of love, not something we can earn. This truth should humble us and fill us with gratitude, reminding us of the hope we now have through Christ. God's forgiveness also transforms us, enabling us to endure trials with confidence in His faithfulness. Are there areas in your life where you struggle to believe in or accept God's forgiveness? As we reflect on His love poured out for us, we are called to extend that same forgiveness to others. Through Christ, forgiveness is not just a gift we receive but a grace we are empowered to share.

- How does the truth that Christ died for you while you were still a sinner shape your understanding of forgiveness and grace?
- Are there ways in which you struggle to fully accept God's forgiveness, and how can reflecting on Romans 5 help you overcome those doubts?
- How can experiencing God's forgiveness empower you to forgive others, even when it feels undeserved?
- Ask God to help you fully embrace the forgiveness and peace He offers through Christ and to give you a heart that reflects His grace, enabling you to forgive others as He has forgiven you.

Day 5

2 Corinthians 5:1-21

This passage speaks of the new life believers have in Christ, emphasizing that through Him, we are reconciled to God. This reconciliation is an act of divine forgiveness, where God no longer counts our sins against us. In verse 17, Paul declares that anyone in Christ is a new creation—the old is gone, and the new has come. This transformation is rooted in forgiveness, where our sins are forgiven, and we are given a fresh start. Moreover, we are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, called to share the message of God's forgiveness with others. Just as God has forgiven us and restored our relationship with Him, we are called to extend forgiveness and seek reconciliation in our

relationships. Are there broken relationships in your life where God is calling you to be a peacemaker? Forgiveness is not always easy, but it is a reflection of the gospel we have received. As ambassadors of Christ, our lives should mirror the grace and forgiveness that God has so generously lavished upon us.

- How does understanding that God has reconciled you to Himself through forgiveness shape the way you view and handle your relationships?
- In what areas of your life is God calling you to extend forgiveness, and how can you begin to pursue reconciliation?
- How can the message of God's forgiveness empower you to live as an ambassador of reconciliation in your community?
- Ask God to help you grasp the depth of His forgiveness and to empower you to extend that forgiveness to others, living as a witness of His grace and reconciling love.



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Want To Go Deeper? - Week 2

Historical Context

The parable of the unmerciful servant, found in Matthew 18:21-35, is rich with historical and cultural context that enhances its meaning. Here are some key points to consider:

1. **Jewish Teaching on Forgiveness:** At the time of Jesus, Jewish tradition often taught that one should forgive a person up to three times. Peter's suggestion of forgiving up to seven times was generous and went beyond the traditional expectation. Jesus' response of "seventy-seven times" (or "seventy times seven" in some translations) indicates an unlimited approach to forgiveness, emphasizing the boundless nature of God's grace.
2. **Debt and Servitude:** In ancient times, debt was a serious matter, and failure to repay could result in severe consequences, including imprisonment or being sold into servitude. The parable's mention of a servant owing ten thousand talents highlights an impossibly large debt, symbolizing the magnitude of sin and the impossibility of repaying it on our own.
3. **Talents and Denarii:** The parable contrasts the enormous debt of ten thousand talents with a much smaller debt of a hundred denarii. A talent was a large unit of currency, worth about 6,000 denarii, and ten thousand talents would be an astronomical sum, far beyond what a servant could repay. This contrast underscores the vastness of God's forgiveness compared to the relatively minor offenses we are called to forgive in others.

4. **Cultural Understanding of Justice and Mercy:** The parable reflects the cultural understanding of justice and mercy. The king's initial decision to sell the servant and his family to repay the debt was a common practice. However, the king's act of forgiving the debt entirely was an extraordinary act of mercy, illustrating the divine forgiveness God offers us.
5. **The Role of Servants:** Servants in the ancient world were often at the mercy of their masters, and their lives could be drastically affected by their master's decisions. The parable uses this dynamic to illustrate the power and authority of God as the ultimate judge and the importance of showing mercy as we have received mercy.

Understanding these historical and cultural elements helps to illuminate the parable's message about the nature of God's forgiveness and the expectation that we, as recipients of such grace, should extend forgiveness to others. The sermon emphasizes that forgiveness is not based on the merit of the one being forgiven but on the grace we have received from God.

Greek Word Study

charis

Original Word: **χάρις**

Pronunciation: khar'-ece

Phonetic Spelling: (khar'-ece)

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: charis

Definition: Grace, favor, kindness, blessing

Meaning: (a) grace, as a gift or blessing brought to man by Jesus Christ, (b) favor, (c) gratitude, thanks, (d) a favor, kindness.

Word Origin: Derived from the Greek verb χαίρω (chairō), meaning "to rejoice" or "to be glad."

Hebrew Counterpart: **חֵן**, **chen**: favor or grace.

Usage: In the New Testament, "charis" primarily refers to the unmerited favor and kindness of God towards humanity. It encompasses the idea of divine assistance given to humans for their regeneration and sanctification. "Charis" is often associated with the concept of salvation, as it is by grace that believers are saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8). It also denotes the graciousness of God in bestowing gifts and blessings upon His people, as well as the grace that believers are to extend to others.

Cultural and Historical Background: In the Greco-Roman world, "charis" was commonly understood as a favor or gift given without expectation of return, often to cement social bonds or express goodwill. In the New Testament, this concept is deepened and transformed to express the profound and unconditional love of God towards humanity, which is not based on human merit but on God's own character and purpose.

Deeper Application

1. **Embrace Humility:** Recognizing that we are sinners saved by grace should cultivate a spirit of humility. This humility acknowledges that we are no better than others and that our standing before God is solely due to His mercy. This perspective can help us approach others with compassion and understanding, rather than judgment or superiority.
2. **Extend Forgiveness:** Just as we have been forgiven an insurmountable debt by God, we are called to forgive others. This forgiveness is not contingent on the other person's actions or repentance but is a reflection of the grace we have received. By forgiving others, we release ourselves from the bondage of bitterness and allow God's love to flow through us.
3. **Live Out Grace:** The sermon challenges believers to let their faith impact every aspect of their lives, not just during church services. This means living out the grace we have received in our daily interactions, being agents of reconciliation and peace in a world that often values retribution and division.
4. **Participate in Divine Rescue:** Understanding that Christianity is about divine rescue rather than self-help should motivate us to share the message of grace with others. We are on a rescue mission, offering hope to those who are lost and pointing them to the transformative power of Jesus.
5. **Reflect on Baptism:** The sermon highlights baptism as a powerful symbol of our new life in Christ. It is a public declaration of our faith and a reminder of the grace that has washed us clean. Reflecting on our baptism can renew our commitment to live as children of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit to overcome sin.