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Study Guide - Week 3

Sermon Recap

Josh's message centers on the theme of grudges and forgiveness, highlighting the harmful effects of holding onto resentment and the necessity of letting go. He discusses various reasons people harbor grudges, such as misunderstandings, unrealistic expectations, and accumulated resentment, stressing that forgiveness is a choice we must actively make. Drawing on biblical teachings, Josh emphasizes that true forgiveness reflects God's grace towards us and is essential for personal freedom and spiritual maturity, challenging listeners to choose forgiveness rather than letting their past define them. He concludes by urging individuals to identify someone they need to forgive and take actionable steps towards releasing that unforgiveness.

Ice Breaker

If you could only communicate using movie quotes for a day, which movie would you pick and why?

Discussion Questions

▼ Josh discusses various reasons for holding grudges, defining *grudge* as a persistent feeling of ill will or resentment resulting from a past insult or injury.

- What are some of the reasons people might feel justified in holding a grudge against someone?
- Think of a time when you felt justified in holding a grudge. How did that impact your relationships with others?

Read Scripture

Exodus 21:22-25 NIV

²² “If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely^[e] but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman’s husband demands and the court allows. ²³ But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

Matthew 5:38-48 NIV

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’^[h] ³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor^[i] and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Discussion Questions

▼ Josh mentions the idea of 'An Eye for an Eye' and how it was used in the Old Testament. He then highlights that while the Old Testament taught retribution, Jesus teaches us to respond with grace and forgiveness.

- What does responding with grace and forgiveness instead of retribution practically look like?
- How can embracing Jesus' message of forgiveness help you break the cycle of resentment in your own life?

▼ Josh shares the teaching from Matthew 5 where Jesus says, 'But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.'

- How can this statement be applied in your life?
- Think of someone in your life who you struggle to love. How might you begin to pray for that person?

Activity

- 1) Have you ever held onto a past hurt, knowing deep down the person who hurt you could never truly make it right?
- 2) Does thinking about past offenses make you more guarded or distant in your current relationships?
- 3) Do you notice that holding onto unforgiveness makes you more guarded or distant in your current relationships?
- 4) Do you struggle with feeling like forgiving someone means letting them off the hook?
- 5) Is it difficult for you to accept that the person who hurt you may never acknowledge the pain they caused?
- 6) Do you ever feel like unforgiveness gives you a sense of control, even if it's actually keeping you stuck?
- 7) When you think about the situation, do you feel trapped in the past instead of moving forward?
- 8) Have your close friends or family ever pointed out that you seem stuck or bitter because of something that happened?
- 9) If someone you love were holding onto the same unforgiveness you're carrying, what advice would you give them?
- 10) If the person who wronged you could never repay or undo the damage, what would it take for you to truly release it?

Discussion Questions

▼ Josh emphasizes that forgiveness is not about letting the other person off the hook. He says that forgiveness is for our own freedom and not about excusing someone's behavior.

- Reflect on a situation where you felt someone didn't deserve your forgiveness. How could viewing forgiveness differently change your feelings?

▼ Josh suggests trying to forgive, especially when the hurt feels too deep. He challenges us to identify specific offenses and choosing to forgive, even when it's difficult.

- Consider a specific situation where you've struggled to forgive. What tangible step can you take this week towards forgiveness?

Prayer

- Ask for God's guidance to help us forgive those who have wronged us this week.
- Pray for healing from past hurts that may be causing grudges in our lives.
- Request strength to let go of bitterness and resentment.
- Ask for the ability to see others through God's eyes and to love them as He does.

Rewatch the sermon

Visit victorycc.life/watch for on-demand access to all of our sermons.

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Bible Reading Plan - Week 3

Day 1

Matthew 5:38-48

Jesus challenges the concept of revenge by teaching a radical way of living marked by love and forgiveness. Instead of responding to wrongdoing with retaliation, Jesus calls His followers to turn the other cheek, give freely, and go the extra mile. Forgiveness, in this context, is not merely about letting go of an offense but actively choosing to respond with love and grace. Loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us reflects the character of our heavenly Father, who shows kindness to both the righteous and the unrighteous. This kind of forgiveness is countercultural and requires a heart transformed by God's grace. It is not about ignoring justice but about trusting God to be the ultimate judge. Are there areas in your life where you need to replace resentment with love and forgiveness? Jesus calls us to rise above human tendencies and embody His perfect love, which forgives even in the face of hurt. By forgiving as Christ forgave, we reflect God's kingdom values and draw closer to His heart.

- How does Jesus's call to love and forgive even your enemies challenge the way you respond to those who hurt you?
- Are there specific situations in your life where you need to let go of resentment and trust God to bring justice?

- What would it look like for you to reflect God's love and forgiveness in a practical way toward someone who has wronged you?
- Ask God to help you love and forgive others as He has forgiven you, giving you the strength to release resentment and trust Him to bring peace and healing to your relationships.

Day 2

Romans 12:9-21

This passage paints a picture of genuine love that reflects the heart of Christ, including the call to forgive. Paul instructs believers to avoid repaying evil for evil and to leave room for God's justice, urging us to overcome evil with good. Forgiveness in this passage is an act of surrender to God, trusting Him to handle offenses rather than seeking revenge. Paul challenges us to bless those who persecute us and live in harmony with others, reflecting the grace we've received through Christ. Forgiveness is not about excusing wrongs but choosing to release bitterness and extend love, even to those who don't deserve it. This kind of forgiveness requires humility and faith, as it goes against our natural desire for retaliation. Are there grudges you're holding that you need to release to God? By forgiving, we not only reflect Christ's love but also free ourselves from the burden of resentment. As we seek to live at peace with everyone, forgiveness becomes a powerful witness of God's transformative grace in our lives.

- What steps can you take to "leave room for God's wrath" and trust Him to bring justice instead of seeking revenge yourself?
- How does choosing forgiveness and overcoming evil with good reflect the character of Christ in your relationships?
- Are there specific people or situations where God is calling you to release bitterness and extend His love through forgiveness?
- Ask God to give you the humility and faith to release any grudges or resentment you're holding, trusting Him to bring justice, and to help you reflect His love and forgiveness in all your relationships.

Day 3

Matthew 6:5-15

Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray, emphasizing the importance of forgiveness in our relationship with God and others. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus instructs us to ask for forgiveness while also committing to forgive those who have wronged us. This connection highlights that our willingness to forgive others reflects our understanding of God's forgiveness toward us. Jesus warns in verses 14-15 that an unforgiving heart can hinder our relationship with God, as it contradicts the grace He has freely given us. Forgiveness is not optional for believers; it is a vital part of living out the gospel. Letting go of bitterness and resentment allows God's peace and love to fill our hearts. Are there areas in your life where you need to forgive someone to restore your fellowship with God? As we pray for God's forgiveness, we are reminded to extend that same grace to others, trusting Him to

bring healing and restoration. Forgiveness is not always easy, but through the Holy Spirit, it is always possible.

- How does reflecting on the forgiveness you've received from God challenge you to forgive others, even when it's difficult?
- Are there unresolved conflicts or unforgiveness in your life that may be hindering your relationship with God?
- What steps can you take today to extend forgiveness and reflect God's grace in your relationships?
- Ask God to search your heart for any bitterness or unforgiveness, to help you fully grasp His grace, and to give you the strength and love to forgive others as He has forgiven you.

Day 4

Luke 23:26-43

In this passage, we witness the incredible forgiveness of Jesus as He is crucified. Despite His immense suffering, Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." His prayer demonstrates the boundless mercy of God, even toward those responsible for His death. This moment on the cross reveals the heart of the gospel: forgiveness offered to sinners who could never earn it. Among the two criminals crucified alongside Jesus, one mocks Him, while the other acknowledges his guilt and turns to Jesus in faith. Jesus's response—"Today you will be with me in paradise"—shows that no sin is too great to be forgiven when we come to Him with a repentant heart. This scene challenges us to reflect on the depth of God's forgiveness and how we are called to extend that same grace to others, even in the face of pain or injustice. Are there people you need to forgive, following the example of Christ? Jesus's prayer on the cross reminds us that forgiveness is an act of surrender, entrusting judgment to God and choosing love instead of resentment. Let His forgiveness inspire you to live with a heart full of grace and mercy.

- How does Jesus's prayer for forgiveness on the cross challenge your perspective on forgiving those who have wronged you?
- Like the repentant criminal, are there areas in your life where you need to turn to Jesus for forgiveness and restoration?
- What steps can you take to reflect Christ's example of forgiveness, even in situations where it feels undeserved or difficult?
- Ask God to help you fully grasp the depth of His forgiveness and to give you the strength and grace to forgive others, trusting Him to heal your heart and guide you to live with mercy and love.

Day 5

Philippians 3:13-14

Paul reflects on his past, acknowledging how he once placed confidence in his achievements and status. However, he now considers all of it as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing

Christ. This passage reveals the power of God's forgiveness, which frees us from the weight of our past mistakes and failures. Paul's focus shifts from his former life to the goal of pressing on toward Christ, forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. Forgiveness plays a central role in this transformation—God's grace enables us to leave behind guilt, shame, and regret, embracing the new identity we have in Christ. Are there areas in your life where you need to let go of the past and accept God's forgiveness? Like Paul, we are called to fix our eyes on Jesus, living in the freedom and hope His forgiveness provides. When we truly embrace God's grace, we can move forward with purpose, trusting in His power to transform our lives. Forgiveness frees us to pursue Christ wholeheartedly, unhindered by what lies behind.

- Are there past mistakes or failures you need to release so you can fully embrace the forgiveness and freedom Christ offers?
- How does God's forgiveness empower you to move forward in faith, pursuing the life He has called you to live?
- What does it mean for you to "forget what is behind" and press on toward the goal of knowing Christ more deeply?
- Ask God to help you let go of any guilt or regret from the past, to embrace His forgiveness fully, and to give you the strength to move forward in faith, pursuing the life and purpose He has set before you.



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Want To Go Deeper? - Week 3

Historical Context

Matthew 5:38-48 is part of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus presents a radical reinterpretation of the law and ethical living. Here are some important historical contexts to consider:

1. **Old Testament Law:** The phrase "eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth" originates from the Old Testament, specifically from passages like Leviticus 24:17-20 and Exodus 21:22-25. This was part of the Mosaic Law, which was intended to limit retribution and ensure justice was proportionate. It was a legal principle meant to guide judges and legislators, not a command for personal vengeance.
2. **Code of Hammurabi:** The concept of "eye for an eye" also appears in the Code of Hammurabi, an ancient Mesopotamian legal text. This indicates that the principle was a common legal standard in the ancient Near East, emphasizing justice and retribution.
3. **Roman Occupation:** During Jesus' time, Judea was under Roman occupation. The Romans had laws that allowed soldiers to compel civilians to carry their equipment for a mile, which Jesus references when He says to go the extra mile. This context highlights the oppressive environment in which Jesus' teachings were given.

4. **Jewish Expectations:** Many Jews expected a Messiah who would lead a political and military revolt against Roman rule. Jesus' teachings on non-retaliation and loving enemies were countercultural and challenged these expectations, emphasizing a kingdom not of this world.
5. **Religious Leaders' Teachings:** The religious leaders of the time, such as the Pharisees, often emphasized strict adherence to the law. Jesus' teachings in this passage contrast with their interpretations, focusing instead on the heart and the spirit of the law rather than mere legalistic observance.
6. **Revolutionary Love:** Jesus' call to love enemies and pray for persecutors was revolutionary. It was a radical departure from the norm and demonstrated a higher standard of love and forgiveness, reflecting God's grace and mercy.

Understanding these contexts helps illuminate the radical nature of Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:38-48, which call for a transformative approach to justice, forgiveness, and love.

Greek Word Study

teleios

Original Word: **τέλειος**

Pronunciation: TEH-lei-os

Phonetic Spelling: (tel'-i-os)

Part of Speech: Adjective

Transliteration: teleios

Definition: Perfect, complete, mature, full-grown

Meaning: perfect, (a) complete in all its parts, (b) full grown, of full age, (c) specially of the completeness of Christian character.

Word Origin: Derived from the Greek word τέλος (telos), meaning "end" or "completion."

Hebrew Counterpart: - **תָּמִים**, **tamiym**: complete, whole, entire, sound.

Usage: In the New Testament, "teleios" is used to describe something that has reached its end or purpose, signifying completeness or maturity. It often refers to spiritual maturity or moral perfection, indicating a state of being fully developed in character and faith.

Cultural and Historical Background: In the Greco-Roman world, the concept of "teleios" was associated with achieving one's purpose or reaching a state of maturity. Philosophers like Aristotle used the term to describe the ultimate goal or end of a process. In the Jewish context, the idea of perfection was linked to living in accordance with God's laws and achieving spiritual maturity.

Deeper Application

- 1. Forgiveness as Liberation:** The sermon emphasizes that forgiveness is not about excusing the wrong or pretending it didn't happen. Instead, it is about releasing ourselves from the control and influence of past hurts. Forgiveness is a gift from God that liberates us from the bondage of grudges and resentment, allowing us to live freely and fully in the present.
- 2. Reflecting God's Character:** By choosing to forgive, we reflect the character of our Heavenly Father. Jesus teaches that when we forgive, we become more like God, who extends grace and mercy to both the righteous and the unrighteous. This aligns with the call to be "perfect" as our Father in heaven is perfect, meaning mature and complete in our Christian character.
- 3. Overcoming Evil with Good:** The sermon highlights that forgiveness is a form of spiritual warfare. By choosing to forgive, we overcome evil with good, as Paul instructs in Romans 12:21. This approach not only disarms the power of evil but also transforms our hearts and relationships.
- 4. Practical Steps Toward Forgiveness:** The sermon encourages taking tangible steps toward forgiveness, such as identifying someone we need to forgive and actively working to release that unforgiveness. This might involve prayer, writing a letter, or having a conversation, even if it is just with God.
- 5. Living Out the Kingdom Ethic:** Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:38-48 call us to live out a kingdom ethic that goes beyond the world's standards. This involves loving our enemies, praying for those who persecute us, and going the extra mile. Such actions demonstrate the revolutionary love that Jesus modeled and that has the power to turn the world upside down.