

# Sermon Discussion Guide

## Connecting with God

### The Lord's Prayer—Part 5: The Prayer of Release

*“Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.”*  
Matthew 6:12 (NLT)

*Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?”* Matthew 18:21 (NIV)

*Jesus answered, “...not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”* Matthew 18:22 (NIV)

Last week we looked at confessing our sins and releasing our guilt. This week we will look at forgiving those who have hurt us and releasing the resentment that can build up if we don't forgive. This phrase of the Lord's Prayer asks God to forgive us to the same extent as we forgive others. How often have we prayed this phrase without thinking of the implications? Do we really want God to forgive us only as much as we have forgiven others? What keeps us from forgiving others even when we know it is what we are commanded to do? In this life we will be hurt by other people. Sometimes the hurt will be intentional and other times the hurt will be unintentional. If we allow resentment to build up over these hurts it will poison our soul. Even if a person hurts us many times, we are to forgive them as many times as they hurt us, as we see from Matthew 18:21–22. This study will focus on the story of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18. We will see why we must forgive those who have hurt us and how we can receive the strength to forgive.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE—SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

## WHY DO I HAVE TO RELEASE THOSE WHO'VE HURT ME?

### 1. GOD HAS FORGIVEN ME.

Read Matthew 18:21–35 and make three observations about the indebted slave.

- What are the implications of not forgiving?
- Discuss why the slave, once forgiven, wouldn't forgive his debtors.

In Romans 3:23–24 who is on the universal list of sinners?

- In what ways is redemption a gift?
- How would you explain the idea of justified?

According to Ephesians 4:32, what should our attitudes be toward each other?

- If the meaning of grace is that we've been instantly forgiven, what is our responsibility toward each other?

### 2. RESENTMENT IS SELF-TORTURE.

What was the result of the slave's lack of forgiveness in Matthew 18:33–34?

- What behavior did the master expect of those he'd been kind to?
- How does a lack of forgiveness affect one's sinful state before God?

In Job 21:23–25 there are two different conditions of men. What are they?

- We need to forgive everyday because harboring resentment and anger can have physical effects. What can we do to keep hurt and pain from embittering our lives?
- When we encounter someone who is judgmental and critical, more than likely they are carrying guilt and anger in their lives. What can we do to extend grace to these people?

What does Job 21:25 say will happen to an angry person?

- According to research, people who hold in anger suffer higher incidents of cancer, diabetes, stroke, and other physical maladies. When we hold on to anger, who is hurt the most?
- How do we know when we're harboring anger or resentment?

### 3. NEED FORGIVENESS EVERY DAY.

After reading Matthew 18:34–35, describe how God will treat those who don't forgive.

- Does this seem cruel? Explain why.
- What do you think the verse means by "torture"?

What are the consequences of forgiving or not forgiving in Matthew 6:14–15?

- If forgiveness is a bridge we need to get to heaven, in what way could we burn it?

**Discipleship**—Forgiveness for the Christian is not an option, but a command. God wants it to be a lifestyle, something we do constantly and continually. He wants us to enjoy it and employ it. One of the ways to maintain a forgiving attitude is to reflect on how graciously he has forgiven us. When we feel graced by God, it's only natural that we can extend grace to others. When we truly sense how much our guilt and sin has been lifted off our minds and hearts, we can let go of the offenses and hurts from others. This is the healing power of grace. What hurt or pain are you going to let go of today? If you are having difficulty answering this question honestly, ask yourself the following questions.

#### **Four Self-Evaluation Questions:**

1. The Blame Test: Who am I the most likely to blame for my problems or unhappiness?
2. The Rehearsal Test: Who is the first person to come to mind when I think of my greatest hurt?
3. The Scoreboard Test: Is there anyone I tend to keep score on?
4. The Reminder Test: Do I ever find myself reacting negatively to someone because they remind me of someone else?

### **HOW DO I RELEASE THEM?**

#### 1. LEAVE IT TO GOD.

What does God want us to leave to him, according to Romans 12:19?

- What are some reasons that God does not want us to seek revenge?
- Name some biblical examples of forgiveness.

#### 2. HEAL IT WITH GRACE.

What warning is given in Hebrews 12:15?

- Why is it critical to respond to God's grace?
- What are the long term effects of not receiving God's grace?

#### 3. NAIL IT TO THE CROSS.

What happens to our sin, according to Romans 6:6?

- What does the cross have the power to do?
- How does unconscious sin manipulate our daily lives?

What does God nail to the cross, according to Colossians 2:13–14?

- Even though we do not deserve God's forgiveness, he forgives. Why does experiencing this free us to forgive others?
- How often does the need arise to seek God's forgiveness?

### **PERSONAL APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT:**

We need to forgive immediately those who have hurt us. We do this because God has forgiven us and we don't want to carry the burden of resentment. God gives us the power to forgive when we turn it over to him, trust in his grace, and depend on the power of the cross. Reflect on the hurts and the names of those people associated with the hurts that come to mind as you work through this study. Are you willing to lay your hurt at the foot of the cross and offer the same forgiveness Christ offered those who crucified him? If you haven't already done so, answer the self-evaluation questions then write down the names that come to mind on a piece of paper and symbolically nail them to the cross. After you have done this, destroy the paper and feel the sense of relief that comes from releasing the resentment and trusting in the grace of God.