

STUDY GUIDE

...

SIX SESSIONS

LYSA TERKEURST

*#1 New York Times Bestselling Author of Uninvited*

**FORGIVING**

**WHAT**

**YOU**

**CAN'T**

**FORGET**



DISCOVER HOW TO MOVE ON, MAKE PEACE  
WITH PAINFUL MEMORIES, AND CREATE A LIFE  
THAT'S BEAUTIFUL AGAIN

# **FORGIVING WHAT YOU CAN'T FORGET**

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**LYSA TERKEURST**



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Hi, friend.

I'm so grateful you decided to join me for this study about forgiving what we can't forget. I'm also proud of you. Because I know deeply and personally how hard all of this can be.

When your heart has been shattered and reshaped into something that doesn't quite feel normal inside your own chest, forgiveness can feel so very unrealistic.

At first, we say it's too soon.

And then years go by, and we say it's too late.

In my own life, I knew as a Christian I was supposed to forgive. I may have even whispered a faint prayer using the word *forgiveness*. But truly understanding how to forgive? I wasn't sure. And isn't it odd that, though forgiveness is a major part of the Christian faith, most of us have never been taught much about it?

We know God commands us to do it. But how? Why? When? And are there exceptions?

After nearly a thousand hours of studying this topic in the Bible, I can't say all my questions have been answered. Nor can I promise this is easy. But I can tell you the Bible offers the truth about forgiveness that our souls desperately need. And, best of all, God Himself modeled how to do this even when it feels impossible.

Instead of digging into just one book of the Bible during this study, we'll be looking at incredibly rich passages throughout Scripture. These truths have meant so much to me personally in my own journey with forgiveness, and I'm believing they're going to leave you forever changed too.

So, let's open up His Word, open up our hearts, and invite His healing in.

Together, we can start seeing beautiful again.



*Forgiveness*  
*is a complicated*

GRACE

*that uncomplicates*  
*my binding pain*  
*and helps me see*

BEAUTIFUL

*again.*

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

## GROUP SIZE

The *Forgiving What You Can't Forget* video study is designed to be experienced in a group setting, such as a Bible study, Sunday school class, or any small group gathering. To ensure everyone has enough time to participate in discussion, larger groups can break up into smaller circles of four to six people after the video is viewed. If you do need to split into smaller groups during your class time, make sure to select one person in each group to act as a facilitator for that group during your discussion.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Each participant should have her own copy of this study guide, as well as her own copy of the book *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. This study guide contains notes for video segments, discussion questions, and personal studies that will deepen learning between group sessions. In addition, the leader will need to have the videos either on DVD or by digital stream/download.

# WEEKLY SCHEDULE

This study guide also provides information at the beginning of each week on which chapters of the book should be read before the group session. You will dig deeper into the book in the personal studies between group sessions.

*Please note: It is recommended that the participants read the introduction and chapters 1-2 before the first class.*

Below is a sample of the schedule you will find at the beginning of every new week.

BEFORE GROUP MEETING	Read Chapters _____ <i>Forgiving What You Can't Forget</i> Book
GROUP MEETING	View Video Session ____ : _____ Group Discussion Pages _____
PERSONAL STUDY DAY 1	Pages _____
PERSONAL STUDY DAY 2	Pages _____
PERSONAL STUDY DAY 3	Pages _____
DAYS 4 & 5 BEFORE WEEK ____ GROUP MEETING	Read Chapters _____ <i>Forgiving What You Can't Forget</i> Book Complete Any Unfinished Personal Study Activities

## TIMING

Time notations have been given for each heading of the group meeting sections of the study. These indicate the *actual* time of the video segments and the *suggested times* for discussion.

Noting these times will help you to complete each session within the time frame your group has available. If your group meets for two hours, you will most likely be able to cover a majority of the questions. Feel free to use any extra time you may have to go back and look at the previous week's homework together, discussing the chapters and study questions more in depth. If your group meets for 90 minutes, you may find you need to pick a few of your favorite group questions to discuss after the video. Remember, the ultimate goal isn't to make it through every single question but to have beneficial and meaningful discussions. We've found some of the most profound moments of a Bible study can happen when participants share experiential wisdom and personal revelations with one another.

You may also opt to devote two meetings rather than one to each session. In addition to allowing conversations to be more spacious, this option has the added advantage of allowing time to discuss the personal studies and the chapters of the book. In the second meeting for each session, devote the time usually allotted for watching the video to discussing participants' insights and questions from their reading and personal study.

## FACILITATION

Each group should appoint a facilitator who is responsible for starting the video and for keeping track of time during discussions. Facilitators may also read questions aloud and monitor discussions, prompting participants to respond and ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to participate. A brief leader's guide for each session can be found in the back of this study guide.

# Schedule

## WEEK 1

BEFORE GROUP MEETING	Read Introduction and Chapters 1-2 <i>Forgiving What You Can't Forget</i> Book
GROUP MEETING	View Video Session 1: What Am I Supposed to Do With All the Hurt? Group Discussion Pages 12-18
PERSONAL STUDY DAY 1	Pages 19-24
PERSONAL STUDY DAY 2	Pages 24-29
PERSONAL STUDY DAY 3	Pages 30-36
DAYS 4 & 5 BEFORE WEEK 2 GROUP MEETING	Read Chapters 3-4 <i>Forgiving What You Can't Forget</i> Book Complete Any Unfinished Personal Study Activities

WHAT AM I  
SUPPOSED  
TO DO WITH  
ALL THE

*Start?*

SESSION 1

## **WELCOME!** (SUGGESTED TIME: 2-5 MINUTES)

Welcome to session 1 of *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. If this is your first time together as a group, take a moment to introduce yourselves to one another before watching the video. Then let's get started!

## **OPENING REFLECTION:** (SUGGESTED TIME: 10-15 MINUTES)

**Leader Note:** Have a few people share their response to this question before starting the video:

**What was your most helpful takeaway from the introduction or chapters 1-2 of the book?**

## **VIDEO** (25:30 MINUTES)

**Leader Note:** Play the video segment for the Introduction and Session 1.

### THIS WEEK'S STATEMENT TO HOLD ONTO:

Forgiveness is not made possible by our determination. Forgiveness is made possible by our cooperation with what God has already done for us.

## VIDEO NOTES

Use the outline below to help you follow along with the teaching video or to take additional notes on anything that stands out.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are not a package deal.

Forgiveness is the very thing God designed to help heal the hurting human heart.

When we refuse to let God's forgiveness flow through us to other people, it becomes a heavy weight that can cause anxiety, fear, depression and angst that no human should have to bear.

Forgiveness isn't dependent on another person making this right. It's between me and God.

**Genesis 4:1-7:** The story of Cain and Abel

v. 6 paraphrase: "Cain, why are you heating up all of your worries and frustrations to the point you are filled with anxiety and depression?"

**Psalm 4:4:**

"Be angry, and do not sin;  
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent." (ESV)

**Psalm 36:1-4:** ". . . even on their beds they plot evil." (v. 4)

## Psalm 36:5-10

v. 5: “Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens,  
your faithfulness to the skies.”

The more we focus on God, the more focused we are on His peace. The more we focus on His peace, the more we'll feel His peace.

When I only think I need a little bit of God's forgiveness flowing to me, then I'm only willing to let very little forgiveness flow through me.

**Matthew 5:42-44** (THE MESSAGE TRANSLATION) “And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life . . . love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst.” (v. 42)

**Genesis 4:7:** “If you do what is right” = “To make a thing good, or right, or beautiful.”<sup>1</sup>

Forgiveness is a complicated grace that uncomplicates my anger and helps me see beautiful again.

# Group DISCUSSION

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(Suggested time: 40-45 minutes)

**Leader Note:** We have suggested questions to start with, but feel free to pick any of the additional questions as well. Consider the timeframe of your group and know the ultimate goal is meaningful discussion.

Please know there is no shame or condemnation as you answer these questions. Remember, this is just the beginning of a journey that will be beneficial, but also hard at times.

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. It's not uncommon for people to pull back and want to self-protect when they hear the word *forgiveness*. What are some of the reasons we may feel resistant to the idea of forgiveness?
  
2. In today's video we learned that forgiveness isn't made possible by our determination. Forgiveness is made possible by our cooperation with what God has already done for us. What do you think it means to cooperate with what God has already done?

3. Before watching this video, did you think that forgiveness and reconciliation were always a package deal? Why is it still important to forgive someone even if we don't reconcile our relationship with them?
  
4. Have someone read Genesis 4:6-8 aloud. God asks Cain to pull back from all the emotion swirling inside of him and to choose to do the right and good thing. What does Cain do instead? While most people would never go so far as murder, what could be some of the devastating outcomes of refusing to allow God to address feelings of anger, anxiety, and despair in our own lives? Why is it important to process forgiveness using God's Word instead of only our thoughts and feelings?

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS (as time allows)

5. Read 1 Peter 5:7-9 aloud: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings."

What similarities do you see between this warning and the one God gives Cain at the end of Genesis 4:7: ". . . sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it"?

6. Open your Bible to Psalm 36:1-4. Read this passage aloud and then discuss the attributes of someone who gives in to sin instead of ruling over it. Which of these descriptions do you find personally convicting?
  
7. Now read Psalm 36:5-10 aloud, changing readers every few verses. What attributes of God do we find in this passage that can help us quiet those things that make us anxious about forgiveness? List as many as you can.
  
8. We learned today that forgiveness is a complicated grace that uncomplicates our anger and helps us see beautiful again. What are some ways unforgiveness can keep us from seeing beauty in our lives? How could forgiveness help us start seeing beautiful again?

## **CLOSING** (SUGGESTED TIME: 5-MINUTES)

**Leader Note:** End your session by reading the “Between-Sessions Personal Studies” instructions on the next page to the group and making sure there are no questions pertaining to the homework. Then take a few minutes to pray over your group, either reading the provided prayer aloud over them or praying your own prayer.

## BETWEEN-SESSIONS PERSONAL STUDIES

Every session in the *Forgiving What You Can't Forget Study Guide* includes five days of personal study to help you make meaningful connections between your life and what you're learning each week. In this first week, you'll work with the material in the introduction and chapters 1-2 of the book *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. You'll also have time to read chapters 3-4 of the book in preparation for our next group meeting.

### PRAYER

*Father God, as we start this journey, we're so thankful we can trust Your love for us. And we're deeply grateful You never shame us for our struggles with forgiveness. Instead, You simply invite us to come to You for Your wisdom, help, and hope. So, that is what we're doing. Please help us to see forgiveness as a gift and not one more burden on our already broken hearts. Help us to believe that healing and freedom are possible, not just for other people but for us. And help us learn to forgive as You have forgiven us. Freely. Completely. Not to excuse what's been done to us, but to set us free. You are good. Your ways are good. And that means we can trust that forgiveness is good too. In Jesus' name, amen.*

# Personal STUDY

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## DAY 1

### STUDY AND REFLECT

Today we're going to reflect more on the video and the introduction of the book *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. If you haven't already read the introduction, please do so before you begin.

#### What if?

There's something so inviting about these two words. They don't demand an answer. They don't force us to land on one side or the other of an issue. Instead, they kindly and humbly ask us to consider something we may have never truly sat with before.

#### What if?

*What if* forgiveness isn't supposed to be another hard thing we have to do? *What if* it's the necessary step to finally experience the peace we desperately want but can't seem to get any other way? *What if* forgiveness is what's been missing in all the relational chaos we're so worn out from dealing with in our lives?

These are some of the questions we'll be sitting with in this study. There's no rush to answer them or even to like them right now. There's also no judgment for any resistance we may currently be feeling toward forgiveness. God gives us full permission to show up with our most honest and vulnerable thoughts and emotions. But He also wants us to bring our willingness. A willingness

to open our hearts to the possibility that forgiveness truly is one of the most healing, crucial, and beautiful gifts from Him.

Let's begin . . .

1. When you hear the word *forgiveness*, what is your gut-honest, initial response? Write down any and every word that comes to mind.

2. How free do you feel to be honest with God about your struggles with forgiveness?

————— 1 ——— 2 ——— 3 ——— 4 ——— 5 ——— 6 ——— 7 ——— 8 ——— 9 ——— 10 —————

I feel completely  
free to tell  
God how I feel

I am afraid God will  
be disappointed in me  
for my struggles

Read Psalm 62:8: “Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.”

How does this verse speak to your heart about talking openly with God as you work through this study?

Our God is big enough to handle our honest feelings and questions we're wrestling through. Honesty is essential for our hearts to be able to heal. Tiptoeing around pretending to be fine, fine, fine with everything that comes our way would be fake at best, deadening at worst. We can bring our gut-honest struggles to God in prayer and use His Word in Scripture to help us process them. The purpose of doing this isn't to say our feelings should lead us . . . it's actually the opposite. The purpose is to use His truth as our “filter” or “guide” so we can have a God-honoring lens through which to process our feelings. He gives us a healthier perspective. Knowing this, do you need to go back to question 1 and add anything you were hesitant to write down at first?

3. Open up your Bible, and let's revisit Genesis 4:1-7 one more time. This may seem like a small detail, but *who* approached Cain about his anger?
- 

*Who* is ultimately asking *us* to take a look at what is going on in us internally right now? \_\_\_\_\_

Remembering ***who*** is asking us to forgive is vital as we navigate forgiveness within the complexities of relationships where we've been deeply wounded. The one requesting this of us is the God who made us, loves us and has good plans for us. The God who does everything on purpose and with purpose. The God we can lean into and trust.

In what ways could knowing God is the one asking this of us soften our hearts toward the idea of forgiveness?

4. As we begin this journey, it's also important to remember God's character and attributes.

Let's read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ."

How is God described?

Where have you already experienced God's comfort in your life in the midst of your trouble and pain?

So many times when we are deeply hurt by someone else, forgiveness can feel like another hard thing we have to do on top of trying to heal. But since God is compassionate, we can know forgiveness isn't a cruel command. Rather, forgiveness is His way of freeing us from the heavy burdens of bitterness, resentment, anger, and retaliation. In essence, forgiveness is not just for the offender but also a gracious gift to us as well. How does this help you start to shift your perspective of forgiveness?

5. Please read the book excerpt below and then answer the questions that follow.

“You can't edit reality to try and force healing. You can't fake yourself into being okay with what happened. But you can decide that the one who hurt you doesn't get to decide what you do with your memories. Your life can be a graceful combination of beautiful and painful. You don't have to put either definitive label on what once was. It can be both-and.

Maybe that's part of what's hard about moving on: the letting go. But what if it's possible to let go of what we must but still carry with us what is beautiful and meaningful and true to us? And maybe this less-severe version of moving on is what will ease us to a place of forgiveness.” (*Forgiving What You Can't Forget*, pages XVI–XVIII)

Do you ever have times where you try to force yourself to just feel better or to get over what happened? Do you ever worry God wants you to just hurry up and be done with all of this hurting? Or, do you find yourself clinging to the hurt and fear, believing that if you take steps to forgive, all the ways you were hurt will be too soon forgotten or unfairly glossed over? Write your thoughts.

Now read the verses below.

“As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;  
for he knows how we are formed,  
he remembers that we are dust.” **Psalm 103:13-14**

“You keep track of all my sorrows.  
You have collected all my tears in your bottle.  
You have recorded each one in your book.” **Psalm 56:8** (NLT)

What do these verses mean to you personally in light of the idea that we don't have to rush healing, fake being fine, or just say the words “I forgive” to check a box?

6. Read Psalm 36:5-10. What attributes of God do you need to cling to personally as you choose to trust Him throughout this process of forgiveness? Fill in the blanks below using a few of those attributes to help you hold tightly to the truth of who God is.

Thank You, God, that You are \_\_\_\_\_. Knowing this will help me \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .

Thank You, God, that You are \_\_\_\_\_. Knowing this will help me \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .

Thank You, God, that You are \_\_\_\_\_. Knowing this will help me \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .

7. Please read the book excerpt below and then finish out today with the instructions that follow.

“It is necessary for you not to let pain rewrite your memories. And it’s absolutely necessary not to let pain ruin your future.” (*Forgiving What You Can’t Forget*, page XVIII)

The hurt you have experienced is real, friend. But it’s taken enough away from you. And your heart is much too beautiful of a place for bitterness, anger, and resentment. Finish today by reading Psalm 42:5 out loud. Let it be a personal declaration to your own soul—you *do* have hope in God. And seeing beautiful again *is* possible with Him.

“Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.” **Psalm 42:5**

## DAY 2

### STUDY AND REFLECT

Today we’re going to reflect on chapter 1 of the book *Forgiving What You Can’t Forget*. If you haven’t already read chapter 1, please do so before you begin.

“... when I wrongly think forgiveness rises and falls on all my efforts, mustered-up grit, conjured maturity, bossed-around resistance, and gentle feelings that feel real one moment and fake the next, I’ll never be able to authentically give the kind of forgiveness Jesus has given me.

My ability to forgive others rises and falls, instead, on this: leaning into what Jesus has already done, which allows His grace *for me* to flow freely *through me* (see Ephesians 4:7).

Forgiveness isn't an act of my determination.  
Forgiveness is only made possible by my cooperation."  
(*Forgiving What You Can't Forget*, page 7)

1. Have you been trying to muster up the strength to forgive others on your own? How does it make you feel to know He is inviting you to *join* Him in His work of forgiveness?

2. Chapter 1 lists many things this journey through forgiveness is NOT. Check the ones you are most thankful for. Circle any that actually surprised you.

Forgiveness is not a message that:

- Diminishes what you've been through or makes light of the anguish you've cried a million tears over.
- Justifies abuse or abandonment or affairs that are all wrong no matter how it's flipped or framed by others.
- Refuses to acknowledge how powerful feelings are and how powerless you can feel when you get flooded by pain, triggered by memories, ignored by those who were supposed to love you, or brushed aside by those who should have cared for you.
- Demands you excuse the cruelest and most horrific crimes committed against you or those you love.
- Gives a nod in the direction of demanding all relationships work out with all people—sometimes that's neither possible nor safe.

3. The purpose of the list above is to assure you this message is one that is overflowing with grace. But, as we learned in chapter 1, grace isn't the only thing we are going to need in order to heal.

## GRACE

*unmerited favor, something that we cannot earn  
but is freely given to us*

Look up John 1:14 and John 1:17 in your Bible. What two things does Scripture say Jesus showed up with?

Why do you think Jesus came with *grace and truth*?

What could be the danger of us approaching the message of forgiveness with all grace but no truth?

What are the dangers of all truth and no grace?

4. Please read the book excerpt below and then answer the questions that follow.

“If I only offered you grace, I would be shortchanging you on what it truly takes to heal. While the truth is sometimes hard to hear, God gives it to us because He knows what our hearts and souls really need. It is His truth that sets us free.” (*Forgiving What You Can’t Forget*, page 6)

Freedom and healing won’t be possible without the truth of God’s Word. Look up each of the passages listed below and then use the space provided to write about how each one complements the idea of Scripture helping us walk in freedom and healing.

Psalms 19:7-11:

2 Timothy 3:16-17:

Hebrews 4:12:

Look back at all three of these passages. What do you feel that you most need God's Word to reveal to you right now? Wisdom? Light in your darkness? A better understanding of forgiveness? Help you rightly discern all that is going on within your heart? Something else? Write your thoughts below. Then, pause for a moment to thank God for all that He is able to accomplish in you through His Word.

## FIGURING OUT FORGIVENESS

*"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" John 8:31-32*

The Greek word for *hold* in John 8:31 is **menō**. It is a word that means "to abide, to remain." This is a critical theme that we see show up in a concentrated way in John 15.<sup>2</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray states in his commentary that this verb "signifies a settled determination to live in the word of Christ and by it, and so entails a perpetual listening to it, reflection on it, holding fast to it, carrying out its bidding."<sup>3</sup>

This is why we are processing forgiveness through the lens of Scripture. As followers of Christ, we are called to listen to the Word, reflect on the Word, hold fast to the Word, and live out the Word. This is what it means to "abide" in Christ and for Christ to be in us. And this is where freedom and fruitfulness become possible.

5. Think of one situation where you've felt as though forgiveness might be asking too much from you. What does it seem like you're giving up to forgive this person or people? What could you possibly gain from forgiving this person or people?

Giving up our right to be resentful or to seek revenge when our hearts have been deeply wounded can feel hard. Let's see what Scripture has to say, remembering that even when Scripture feels difficult, what it teaches us is always for our good.

Fill in the blanks.

"Do not repay \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_. On the contrary, repay \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a \_\_\_\_\_." **1 Peter 3:9** (NIV)

What is your initial response to this verse? How does it feel possible or impossible in light of all that you have faced?

Read 1 Peter 2:21-23 in your Bible and then answer the questions below.

Did Jesus have every right to retaliate? Why or why not?

When are you most tempted to feel that retaliation is justifiable?

Why does this passage of Scripture say He was able to trust God instead of seeking retribution?

Do you trust God to handle things rightly, even if you never get to see how? (Please don't feel frustrated with yourself or condemned if your answer to that last question is "no." We will dive further into trusting the justice of God later in the study.)

6. In both the video and in the introduction, we've looked at how refusing to let God's forgiveness flow through us to other people can become a heavy weight that causes anxiety, fear, depression, and angst inside of us.

Have you ever stopped to consider that unforgiveness may actually be compounding your pain? In what ways could this be playing out in your own life?

Remembering how much forgiveness has flowed *to* us can help as we begin this process of letting it flow *through* us. Spend some time looking up these passages of Scripture. Ask the Lord to use these verses to begin softening your heart toward the idea of forgiving as you have been forgiven. Circle which one resonates with you personally, and write why in the space below.

1 John 1:9

Colossians 2:13-15

Psalms 103:8-14

Isaiah 43:25

End today by writing out a prayer of thanksgiving for the Lord's mercy and forgiveness.

## DAY 3

# STUDY AND REFLECT

Today we're going to reflect on chapter 2 of the book *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. If you haven't already read chapter 2, please do so before you begin.

1. Please read the book excerpt below and then answer the questions that follow.

"... we each wrestled through our own questions about forgiveness in the midst of the gritty, tearful, desperate experiences we brought to the table. And, though you didn't know it, we always had an extra chair for you.

Here, your questions are safe. Your heartbreak is tenderly held. Your thoughts don't need to be edited. Your soul's need for truth will be tended to. And your resistance is understood. Welcome to the gray table, friend." (*Forgiving What You Can't Forget*, page 15)

Psalm 23:5 reads,

"You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows."

No matter how many tables we've been invited to or excluded from, the Lord says we always have a place at His. Stop to truly consider this. What does it mean to you that Jesus says you are always loved, always welcome, always invited near?

2. This concept of being welcomed to the table is important as we purposefully sit with this message of forgiveness over the next few weeks. In Scripture, the table is presented as a place of communion, conversation, and connectivity. It is a place we go to know others and invite others to know us. It is a space that's meant to flow with the balanced rhythm of giving and receiving.

In the Old Testament, the prophets used imagery of a great feast to represent the rule and reign of God (Isaiah 25:6). It's an image that helps us picture God inviting us to experience not only nourishment and sustenance, but also the comfort of His presence and power.

We also find Jesus sharing meals around tables in the New Testament, the most memorable being the Last Supper. This is the table Jesus shared with His disciples before He went to the cross, and it's one He invites us to still today as we take communion together in remembrance of His sacrifice for our redemption. (See Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.)

And while there are no physical tables present, there are two other moments surrounding meals and Jesus that we would be wise not to overlook. When Peter publicly denies Jesus in John 18, he is near a charcoal fire where eating and drinking were most likely taking place. It's a moment that then connects directly to another scene around a charcoal fire with Jesus and Peter in John 21, when the resurrected Jesus prepares a meal for His disciples and then publicly restores Peter. We find in the intertwining of these moments, and even in all that is represented by the Last Supper, that the table is the perfect place for the broken and battered to find redemption and restoration from the provider of the meal—Jesus.

Let's read that last line again: “. . . the table is the perfect place for the broken and battered to find redemption and restoration from the provider of the meal—Jesus.”

How do these words impact you in light of this study?

Is there anything else you read in the paragraphs above that stood out to you or encouraged you?

3. Remembering that we have permission to show up to this conversation with all of our brokenness, doubts, and questions, read through the list below. These are some of the feelings that can feed our resistance to forgiveness. Do any of these resonate with you? Check the ones that apply:

1.  I fear the offense will be repeated.
2.  Hanging on to a grudge gives me a sense of control in a situation that's felt so unfair.
3.  The pain I experienced altered my life, and yet no one has ever validated that what I went through was wrong.
4.  Forgiveness feels like it trivializes, minimizes, or, worse yet, makes what happened no big deal.
5.  I can't possibly forgive when I still feel so hostile toward the one who hurt me.
6.  I'm not ready to forgive.
7.  I still feel hurt.
8.  They haven't apologized or even acknowledged that what they did was wrong.
9.  Being back in relationship with this person isn't possible or safe. Furthermore, it's not even reasonable for me to have a conversation with the person who hurt me.
10.  I'm still in the middle of a long, hard situation with no resolution yet.
11.  I'm afraid forgiveness will give them false hope that I want to re-establish the relationship, but I don't.
12.  It's easier to ignore this person altogether than to try to figure out boundaries so they don't keep hurting me.
13.  What they did is unchangeable; therefore, forgiveness won't help anything.
14.  The person who hurt me is no longer here. I can't forgive someone I can't talk to.
15.  I don't think any good will come from forgiveness now.

Is there anything else you would add to this list?

4. Wherever you are on this journey, it's important to recognize and acknowledge that place. Indicate where you are on the diagram below:



5. Please read the book excerpt below and then answer the questions that follow.

“Sometimes it seems easier to deny my pain than to do the hard work to deal with and heal what’s really there.” (*Forgiving What You Can’t Forget*, page 21)

How does this resonate with you?

Do you tend to process life through the way you want it to be or the way it actually is?

The more we deny what’s going on inside of us, the less likely we’ll be to even pull up a seat to the table to process our pain. Read through the list below. Check any statement that comes the closest to something you would say to gloss over your pain:

1. \_\_\_ I’m good. I’m fine. I’ve just decided to move on.
2. \_\_\_ It’s their loss for walking away from me.
3. \_\_\_ God will eventually make everything all right.
4. \_\_\_ As a Christian, I know I should forgive, so I have.

5. \_\_\_ What's in the past is in the past. I'm just walking forward. No big deal.
6. \_\_\_ There's so much to be thankful for, so I'm just choosing to be grateful.
7. \_\_\_ Who has the time or energy to unpack why this happened and how it affected me? Let's just move on.
8. \_\_\_ I'm mature enough to say, "It is what it is," and get over it.

Take some time now or over the next few days to ask the Lord to help you press past your places of denial. He isn't disappointed or overwhelmed by our level of need. You can journal here or in a separate notebook. Psalm 86:1-7 is a great passage of Scripture to use as you confess your need for healing and help. Also, prayerfully consider reaching out to a trusted friend or seeking the help of a Christian counselor as you begin addressing wounds you've long denied were there.

6. Please read the book excerpt below and then answer the questions that follow.

“When this world—so saturated with flesh resenting flesh, hearts hating hearts, fists slamming fists, pride rising against pride—suddenly sees someone dropping their sword and daring to whisper, ‘I forgive’ . . . IT STOPS ALL.

In the split second of that utterance, evil is arrested, heaven touches earth, and the richest evidence of the truth of the gospel reverberates not just that day but for generations to come. While salvation is what brings the flesh of a human into perfect alignment with the Spirit of God, forgiveness is the greatest evidence that the Truth of God lives in us.” (*Forgiving What You Can't Forget*, page 24)

By what power does this excerpt say we're able to override the resistance of our flesh and the pull of unforgiveness? (See Acts 1:8; Acts 2; and 1 John 4:4 for more study.)

- When living out God's commands feels too hard, we may need to rewrite the script playing in our heads using Scripture. Highlight the declaration you most need below and then spend some time meditating on the passage of Scripture that goes along with it.

Are there any other verses that are encouraging you right now? Fill in the the last two rows on page 36 using those passages as a guide to write your own declarations.

MY CURRENT SCRIPT	SCRIPTURE I CAN TURN TO	MY NEW DECLARATION
Living this call of forgiveness is too hard in today's world and in my circumstances.	2 PETER 1:3-4	God has given me everything I need to live for Him through His Word, by His power and in my growing knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ.
My heart is so devastated, I don't have the strength to pray.	ROMANS 8:26-27	It's okay if all I can bring is tears today. The Holy Spirit is interceding for me.
I'm just too broken to have the strength to face any of this.	2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10	God's grace is sufficient for me. And He is my strength when I don't feel like I can go on.
Honestly, I don't even want to forgive.	PHILIPPIANS 2:13	God is able to give me the power and the desire to do what pleases Him.

MY CURRENT SCRIPT	SCRIPTURE I CAN TURN TO	MY NEW DECLARATION

8. How has forgiveness felt like a “misery” to you in the past? How can you now see forgiveness as a “life-giving freedom”?

God is okay with us asking Him to help our unbelief. Use the space below to write out your own “help my unbelief” prayer.



## **DAYS 4 & 5**

# REVIEW AND READ

Use this time to go back and complete any of the study and reflection questions from previous days this week that you weren't able to finish. Make note of any revelations you've had and reflect on any growth or personal insights you've gained.

Spend the next two days reading chapters 3 and 4 of *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. Use the space below to make note of anything in the chapters that stands out to you or encourages your heart.

# Schedule

## WEEK 2

BEFORE GROUP MEETING	Read Chapters 3-4 <i>Forgiving What You Can't Forget</i> Book
GROUP MEETING	View Video Session 2: Your Mind, Your Mouth, Your Master Group Discussion Pages 40-45
PERSONAL STUDY DAY 1	Pages 46-51
PERSONAL STUDY DAY 2	Pages 52-57
PERSONAL STUDY DAY 3	Pages 58-63
DAYS 4 & 5 BEFORE WEEK 3 GROUP MEETING	Read Chapters 5-7 <i>Forgiving What You Can't Forget</i> Book Complete Any Unfinished Personal Study Activities



# FORGIVING WHAT YOU CAN'T FORGET

by **LYSA TERKEURST**

**Why should I have to be the one who forgives when I'm the one who has already suffered the most?**

We know God commands us to forgive. But **how**, when the hurt plays over and over in our mind? And **why**, when we have already suffered so much? And, **are there exceptions**, such as when the other person keeps inflicting pain?

Lysa TerKeurst has walked this journey, carrying so many wounds that felt unforgivable, that she at first refused to write this book! But after more than 1,000 hours of theological study, Lysa has discovered that Scripture not only offers the truth about forgiveness that our souls desperately need, but practical ways to let go of our bound-up resentment and finally heal.

If you have felt stuck in a cycle of unresolved pain, or resistant to forgiving people who aren't willing to make things right, you need the life-giving freedom that comes with learning how to *forgive what you can't forget*.

**LEARN MORE**