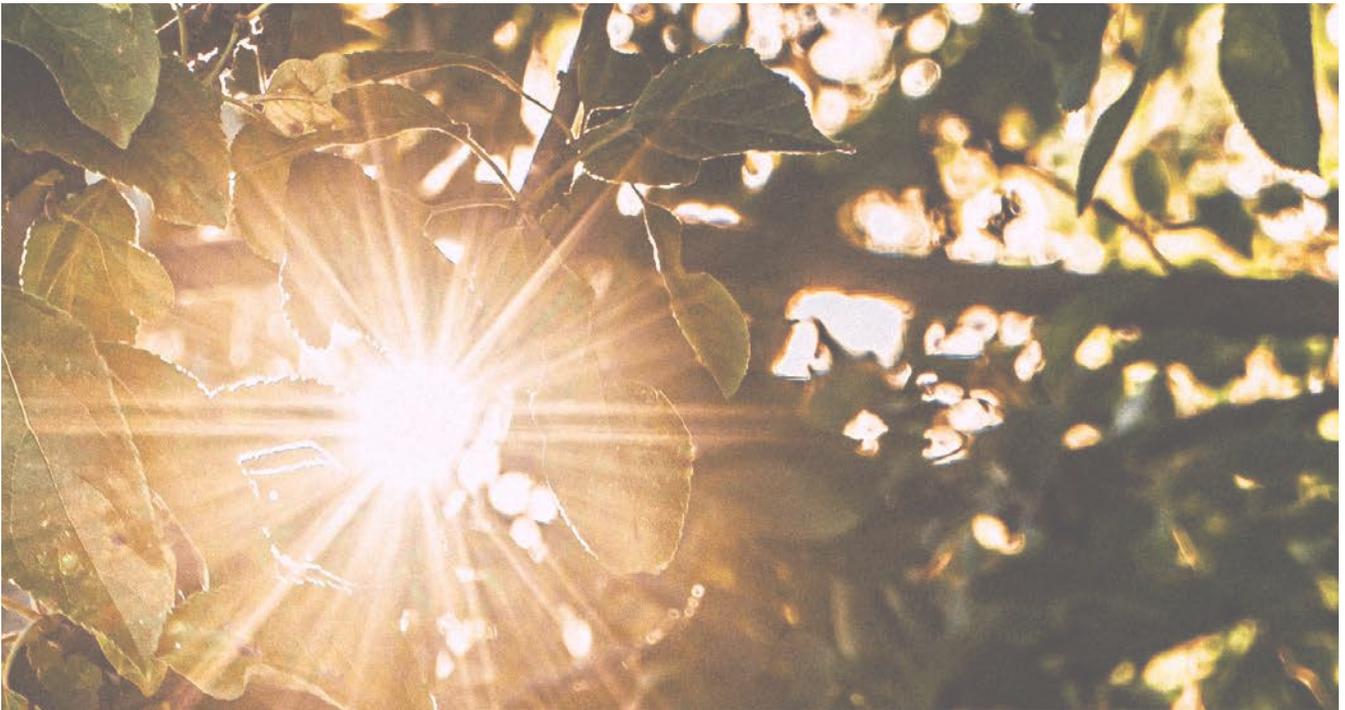




YOU ARE FORGIVEN

WEEK 2





“But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

-Romans 6:22-23

DAY 1 - MONDAY

ROMANS 6:15-23, GALATIANS 5:16-17

Reflection:

Why do you think forgiveness is so crucial for the Christian life?

How do you think believing and regularly practicing forgiveness can change the way you live?

Changing our Nature

David writes in Psalm 51:5, "For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me." David points to a theological truth that we don't have to be experts in the Bible to understand. We are sinful. We are drawn and prone to do the things we are not supposed to. Something in our inner workings, our fiber, our being, is corrupt. We are led to corrupt living countless times in our day.

Our corrupt nature leads us to think things we know we shouldn't, to say things we don't want to, and to do things we know are bad for us. Every person on earth is aware of their shortcomings, but what's unique to the Christian is the invitation towards receiving forgiveness and adopting the new nature, or life, that we can cling to. Those who have genuinely accepted Jesus as their Savior receive a greater awareness of the deep soul-resting connection that the Holy Spirit has within us. This Holy Spirit connection and awareness wake us up to see our sinful nature as something that can and will be forgiven if we invite the Holy Spirit into it.

The Holy Spirit wakes us up toward the power that only He possesses to forgive our sins, cleanse our spirits, and develop a new nature within us. The Holy Spirit leads us through the regular practice of forgiveness toward the life found in embracing our new nature of holiness. When we are aware of and regularly receive the forgiveness of our Savior, we can begin to embrace a nature that is, as Paul says in Romans, a slave to righteous living. We no longer will seek to live well or righteous by our own strength, for our own glory. We no longer will ignorantly embrace our sinful nature but instead feel the tension of fighting the sinful nature in our souls to embrace the forgiven, righteously embedded nature of our new soul in Christ. This changing nature is only possible through embracing the process of confession, repentance and forgiveness available through Jesus.

DAY 2 - TUESDAY

ISAIAH 1:18-20, JOHN 15:1-5, HEBREWS 10:19-25,
1 JOHN 1:7-9, PSALM 51

Reflection:

Reflect on Psalm 51. Take the time to reflect on all that He has already forgiven you for. Ask God to show you where you might need to confess and ask for forgiveness. Offer up a prayer of gratitude that Jesus wipes our slate clean.

A Clean Heart

We were made clean when Jesus shed His blood on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. You see, in essence, He did wipe the slate clean on the cross. We are guilty of the sins we commit, yet His cleansing blood renders us NOT guilty before God. But as we read passages like John 15, we see that Jesus intends for the cleansing to continue as we walk closely with Him. John teaches that, as believers, we walk in the light. But that doesn't mean we'll never sin. In fact, we definitely will sin. Yes, we've been saved from the power of sin, but no, we're not perfect yet. So what should we do when we sin?

Those who walk in the light don't simply admit their sin to God; we grieve over it and turn away from it, hating our sin as He does. When we do so, God is "faithful and just" and forgives us— because Christ has already paid the price. There is power in the cleansing blood of Jesus. The cleansing occurs the first moment we confess that we are sinful and need a Savior and ask Jesus to be the Lord of our life. We then receive forgiveness for all the sins we have committed. But the cleansing doesn't stop there; it continues as we walk with Him and acknowledge, confess, and repent from our sins. When God forgives, He not only chooses to forget the sin but also purifies and cleanses us as part of His ongoing work of sanctification in our lives. 1 John 1:9 says, "if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness." The forgiveness we first received when we came to Christ is the same forgiveness available to us today, when we sin. Repent, and God will renew a right spirit and a clean heart within you. He will wash you whiter than snow. God breathes life into our sin-gripped hearts, freeing us from sin's bondage with His forgiveness that transforms us from the inside out.

"And if the bad news is that we are all unclean, the good news is that there is one gospel to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." - Lore Ferguson Wilbert

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

EPHESIANS 2:8, EPHESIANS 1:7-8, PSALM 103:8-13

Reflection:

What does it mean to open ourselves to receive Christ?

Why is this hard for us to do?

How can you begin to open yourself to receive the gift of God's grace today?

The Free Gift

In life, we are used to doing things in order to receive things. We work to receive a paycheck. We use that paycheck to receive food, clothes, a home, a car, toys for our kids, etc. We take care of these things to keep and enjoy them. Life is work. What's exciting and unique about forgiveness and grace, though, is that it's a gift. There's nothing we can give in order to receive the love of Christ; it's already there, given to us for free. There's nothing we can do to be forgiven by God except ask and receive it; it's offered to us.

God's grace is a gift we receive, not work for or towards. To live in the belief that you are forgiven, you have to open your heart to receive it. The act of opening and receiving works within us to create the beginnings of a fertile soul to receive more of God's grace, love, compassion, forgiveness, goodness, instruction, mercy, etc. In short, simply opening and receiving the free gift of grace and forgiveness creates within us a heart ready to receive more and more of Him and live more and more for Him.

DAY 4 - THURSDAY

EPHESIANS 2:1-10, 1 PETER 1:18-25, ROMANS 6:1-10

Reflection:

List how you have seen Jesus bring you from death to life.

How can we help others move from death to life?

From Death to Life

The central message of the gospel is that we cannot save ourselves. We need a Savior to forgive our sins. Salvation is a gift of grace and mercy to sinners from the selfless sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His work on our behalf is our only hope. It is done. He has done it all. We are saved by grace and by grace alone.

We were dead in our sins. Not sick and just in need of a band-aid or some medicine. We were spiritually buried in the ground, unable to do anything but continue in the deadness of our sin. **"But God"**—these are perhaps the greatest words in the Bible.

*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us,
made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses.*

You are saved by grace!

- Ephesians 2:4-5

We were dead, but God...We were slaves to sin, but God...We had no hope, but God, in His love for us, saw our sad helpless state and brought us back to life by sending His Son to die. God saved us by His grace.

We were buried, therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

- Romans 6:4

Our sins were placed onto Jesus at the cross, and He paid for them in full. This is a free gift of God, no strings attached. His resurrection means that we, too, have been given new life. Why would God offer this free gift to us if it meant the sacrifice of His one and only Son? Paul points it out to us in Ephesians 2:7: "So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus." We are displays of his grace and his kindness. Now we get to be messengers that bring others from death to life. We get to share what He has done for us with others. We are living proof that He lives.

DAY 5 - FRIDAY

1 JOHN 1:8-9, PSALM 32:1-3

Reflection:

Why are we prone to trying to take care of ourselves?

What does it mean to you that Jesus is faithful to forgive us?

Faithful to Forgive

"Just walk it off" is the most basic medical advice we, the uneducated in the medical field, know how to give. When our child scrapes their leg, we hug them and tell them to walk it off. When a spouse stubs their toe on the corner of the bed, we sympathize with them and tell them to walk it off. We're used to giving this advice for healing, but this doesn't always work. We've seen it in sports. An athlete gets tackled or gets hit. They go down or try to walk off the hurt, but it doesn't go away. In these moments, they are incapable of fixing themselves. They need something more.

Jesus points us towards the reminder throughout scripture that our brokenness is not something we can simply walk off. We can't fix our problem of sin. We can't just wipe clean the slate of our wrongs from our life or from the lives of others. That is a work that only He can begin to do. It's the work of forgiveness that only He can perform. We have to seek forgiveness from Him. The problem with the "walk it off" treatment plan is that it doesn't always (rarely does actually) fix the problem. The same is true of our sin problem. We cannot forgive our sins; He is the only one who can. He is the giver of grace and mercy.

As scary as it may be to admit you have a problem you can't fix on your own may be, there's joy in knowing that He is faithful to forgive. Throughout the week, we've studied and come to grips with the truth that He is our only means of forgiveness, and we can have joy and freedom in that because He is faithful to forgive us. When we seek His forgiveness, He always answers with grace, mercy, and love. He wipes the slate clean of our sinful lives. He heals us in ways we can never heal on our own. He is always present, always able, and always faithful to forgive.

DAY 6 - SATURDAY (REFLECTION DAY)

ROMANS 6:15-23

Reflection Notes and Questions:

To be forgiven is to be made new. The Lord offers us no greater gift than open, welcoming arms back to Him when we fall. Understanding the gospel belief that He forgives and is never short of pouring out His forgiveness on us, is pivotal. This week you spent time looking at this belief and seeking to understand the depths and power of His forgiveness. We're invited to study and experience this belief for the rest of our lives.

As we wrap up week 2 of this study, reflect on what it means that you are forgiven, and follow these reflection practices below:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.

- Why do you think the gospel belief that you are forgiven is essential for us to understand and internalize?

- Take time right now to thank God for His forgiveness and seek to start a rhythm of forgiveness in your life today.

DAY 7 - SUNDAY

REST DAY

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading you missed. Use today as a rest and preparation for your heart towards next week's time with God in this study.