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# 12 SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

TO GROW IN JESUS CHRIST

# DEVOTIONAL 2026

APRIL • MAY • JUNE



# WELCOME!

We're glad you have chosen to use this devotional!

As you may know, Burke Community Church has decided to make 2026 a year to focus on discipleship - that is, the process of growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ - and we are going to use the model of 12 Spiritual Practices in order to do that. This is our church's own take on the many books, lessons, sermons and curricula that have been produced through the years to help Christians observe and learn from how Jesus lived. These are often called "Spiritual Disciplines," and this devotional is designed to walk you through the process of practicing these weekly.

One thing that is especially helpful about doing this as a church family is that you will have the opportunity to share your experiences of growth with others. To that end, we encourage you to join a life group if you haven't yet (<https://www.burkecommunity.com/lifegroups/>), as many of our groups will be discussing these practices together. Diving in on your own is great, too! Maybe you are interested in spending additional time during the week engaging in these practices, and for that we have journals available in *The Nook* for documenting your deep thoughts :). **New and improved in this Devotional are daily scripture readings and prayer prompts to help you stay connected!**

No matter how you journey through these practices, one thing is very important to remember: The 12 Spiritual Practices are the means and not the end. The end goal is growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Philippians 3:8 (ESV) articulates this well: "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

As a Burke Community Church family, let us grow in Jesus Christ in 2026, and find joy in engaging these Spiritual Practices together!



## OVERVIEW

### HUMILITY

Phil 2:3-5

WEEK 1	April 5	You
WEEK 2	April 12	Others
WEEK 3	April 19	Christ
WEEK 4	April 26	Centered

### PROCLAMATION

Mt 28:18-20

WEEK 1	May 3	Authority
WEEK 2	May 10	Communicate
WEEK 3	May 17	Logos/Truth
WEEK 4	May 24	Lifestyle

### FORGIVENESS

Mt 18:21-22

WEEK 1	May 31	Jesus
WEEK 2	June 7	How many times?
WEEK 3	June 14	Ongoing
WEEK 4	June 21	You





# HUMILITY

Philippians 2:3-5

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

### Focus: You

Humility begins by moving from self-centered to self-aware

In his book *The Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster speaks of the discipline of “submission” as “the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way.” While *submission* and *humility* aren’t exactly the same, this quote still helps illustrate the point the Apostle Paul was making in Philippians 2:2 when he said: “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit...” Most Christians agree with this spiritual concept in principle, yet spend much of their lives pursuing their own agenda, likely because of the difficulty of taking the focus off of their own wants and desires. Paul understood this difficulty, thus a deeper dive into the Greek text shows that the verb “do” is actually not there! In fact, Paul doesn’t use a verb at all in this verse until “*count* (or *consider*) others as more important than yourselves,” and even then, the verb is in passive form, which means it is less about something we *do*, but more about something that is *done to* (or, *in*) us! Thus the mystery of mastering the art of humility is that it isn’t something we can achieve under our own power, rather it is an outcome of something that God achieves IN us. As humans we simply cannot try really hard to “do nothing from selfish ambition,” but if we remain open to “being moved to” (NET word choice instead of “count”) by God in our lives, we, in turn, develop humility. This requires yielding our lives to God’s will. How? Like Jesus, of course! One of Jesus’ greatest models of humility was in the Garden of Gethsemane when he prayed to the father “not my will, but yours be done.” This is what we call surrender, and it is a required ingredient for developing humility. So, let’s be free from the “terrible burden of always needing to get our own way.” Let’s do that by remembering the old hymn which sang, “more of You, less of me...”

# [ HUMILITY ]

**WEEK 1**

April 5-11

## Reflection Questions

Where have you felt “selfish ambition” in your life recently? How can you shift that trajectory?

List a few ways Jesus demonstrated selflessness. How does this list impact you personally?

Thinking ahead, how could your life be different if you felt freedom from the “need to get your own way?”

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	Ps 139:23-24	Search me, God, and show me what I can't see. Help me walk in honesty before You.
DAY 3	Jam 4:6-10	Lord, help me lay down pride today and receive Your grace.
DAY 4	Pro 16:1-6	Refine my motives, God, and align my heart with Yours.
DAY 5	Luke 18:13-14	Keep me humble before You, aware of my need for Your mercy.
DAY 6	1 Cor 4:6-7	Remind me that everything I have is from You.
DAY 7	Micah 6:8	Teach me to walk humbly with You today.

### Focus: Others

Humility moves from self-centered to others-centered

Have you ever been challenged to summarize a complex topic succinctly into a very short brief? What about capturing something in a single word. Can one attempt to sum up the Good News of Jesus Christ in just one word? Here goes: ...Salvation, ...Grace, or ...Redemption. All outstanding one-word summaries. There so much that God richly presents to us in the Gospels. There is likely no one "right" word to do it, but it's worth thoughtful contemplation. What about: ...others?

In Philippians 2:3-4 the Apostle Paul's reflects on Christ's love in action, advising us to "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value *others* above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the *others*. We see profound implications of not looking toward our interests, rather to others. God set the supreme example of loving others (John 3:16) "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Billy Graham placed a special emphasis on God's sacrifice, often noting that John 3:16 is the "Gospel in a Nutshell". As we strive closer to Christ and His love for us, we are called to move away from ourselves. Perhaps the closest we come near Christ in this life is by loving and serving others.

*Others* is love in action. Putting it in practice *others* is loving God and our neighbors (Mark 12:30-31), those who are needy or marginalized (Luke 14:13-14), and our enemies (Matthew 5:44). In a word, *others* might be one of the most succinct expressions of the Gospels. Our humility grows as we move from self-centered to others-centered, allowing us to heed Christ's call for outcomes.

### Reflection Questions

In your journey toward Christ and putting your humility into practice, what are some tangible examples of what it will take to change your focus? What about some intangible examples?

How do you see others in your daily walk?

As you strive to be others-focused, how do you see your words, and more importantly your actions change?

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	Phil 2:3	Help me consider others more important than myself today.
DAY 3	Rom 12:10	Teach me to honor others above myself in real, practical ways.
DAY 4	John 13:14-15	Show me how to serve others like You did, Jesus.
DAY 5	Gal 5:13	Help me use my freedom to serve others in love.
DAY 6	Jam 3:17	Grow in me a gentle and humble spirit toward others.
DAY 7	Eph 4:2	Give me patience and humility in all my relationships.

### Focus: Christ

Christ the ultimate model of humility (Phil 2:5-7)

While our key verse for the month is Philippians 2:2-3, this week we cast our eye down the page all the way to verse 8 (read those if you have not yet). In these verses, we get a clear and powerful picture of how Jesus, Himself, exuded humility, not only as an example to us, but as a means to be the acceptable sacrifice for the sins of humanity on the cross. The theology in this passage is rich, and simply cannot be boiled down to a short devotional, but a gross oversimplification, however, might go something like this: Jesus gave up what He deserved in order to give to us what we didn't deserve. He gave up his life so we could have it. Sometimes the question arises if Jesus cared more about us than he cared about Himself? If so, are we to care about others more than ourselves?" John 15:13 says "greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." Another hard question: "to what degree are Christians supposed to emulate Christ's demonstration of ultimate love on the cross?" Perhaps the answer is found next few verses of Philippians (read 9-11), portraying the exaltation of Christ, reminding us that humility, itself, is *not* the end goal. It wasn't for Jesus and it is not for us. The end goal of Jesus' humility was that God would receive glory, honor and praise. The end goal of our humility is the same. So when you think of putting others before yourself, this is not an exercise in fruitless self-devaluation, rather, in God glorification. My prayer is that, like Christ, we would always have the eyes to know the difference.

### Reflection Questions

Re-read Philippians 2:1-11. What is the line that stands out most to you? Why?

As humans, how much should we expect we can emulate Christ in our lives?

Healthy boundaries are an important part of the Christian life. How might boundaries play a part in our call to “care about others more than (or at least equal to) yourself?”

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	Phil 2:5	Shape my mindset to reflect the humility of Christ.
DAY 3	Mark 10:45	Help me follow Your example of serving, not being served.
DAY 4	2 Cor 8:9	Remind me of the humility You showed in becoming poor for us.
DAY 5	Heb 12:2	Fix my eyes on You, Jesus, and the humility of the cross.
DAY 6	John 5:19	Teach me to depend on the Father as You did.
DAY 7	Is 53:7	Help me embrace quiet strength and humility like You.

## **Focus: God-centered**

Humility is found in being God-aware and God-centered

“Does God ask us to do what is beneath us? This question will never trouble us again if we consider the Lord of heaven taking a towel and washing feet.” Elisabeth Elliot

I long misunderstood what humility really was. I knew from the Bible that it was important, but I had no idea of how to be humble. After I gave my life to Christ, I started with what I knew from the world. I knew what it was like to be humbled—to fall short of my own expectations—or to be humiliated by others for a flaw or mistake.

Therefore, I started trying to be humble by being self-deprecating. I would say that I was stupid, or an idiot if I made a mistake. However, I realized that this was just false-humility because I got upset when anyone agreed with me! Moreover, who was I to tear down someone—me—whom Christ thought was valuable enough to die for?

Then, I realized that I’d missed the most obvious example, Jesus. Jesus, God in the flesh, never tore Himself down. To be sure, Jesus focused on others more than Himself. However, Jesus’s humility was foremost God-focused. Jesus was consumed with how to accomplish His Father’s will, glorifying His Father, obeying His Father, speaking His Father’s words, and doing the things He saw His Father do.

In Jesus, I had my answer: true humility was not avoiding thinking of myself or tearing myself down but being entirely consumed with God. What freedom to no longer worry about what I or other people think about me and only concerned with thinking about Him.

# [ HUMILITY ]

**WEEK 4**  
April 26–May 2

## Reflection Questions

What would it look like practically to remain God-focused throughout one workday?

In what ways do your personal experiences of being humbled or humiliated shape your understanding of humility and your relationships with others?

Reflecting on the idea of focusing on God above yourself, how can that help you place the interests of others before your own in a world that often promotes self-interest?

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	Micah 6:8	Help me walk humbly with You and stay aware of Your presence.
DAY 3	Ps 115:1	Shift my focus from myself to Your glory.
DAY 4	Col 3:2	Lift my thoughts above myself to things that honor You.
DAY 5	Pro 3:5–6	Teach me to trust You instead of leaning on myself.
DAY 6	Is 26:8	Help me wait on You and center my life on Your name.
DAY 7	1 Pt 5:6	Humble me under Your mighty hand, trusting Your timing.



# PROCLAMATION

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in<sup>[a]</sup> the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

### Focus: Authority

Proclamation is rooted in Jesus' command to make disciples

What part of your life are you still holding as if you have the final say? In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus speaks a steady truth: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Just before this moment, Matthew notes something tender and honest—the disciples worshiped Him, yet some still doubted (Matthew 28:17). Jesus does not pause for their doubts to resolve. He meets them where worship and uncertainty coexist, and He speaks anyway.

Authority comes first. Before Jesus sends His followers, He reminds them who He is. Scripture echoes this truth: the Father "put all things under his feet" (Ephesians 1:22). Jesus is not asking for permission or influence. He reigns. Because of that, obedience does not wait for clarity, confidence, or perfect conditions. I respond because the One who calls me already holds all things. The question is, do I believe this is true? Do I view Jesus as my sovereign Lord and worthy of all my praise.

Having lived in places where authority structures matter, this passage presses close to home. Jesus' authority does not stay in spiritual conversations—it reaches out to my schedule, my leadership, and my quiet desire to stay in control. Yet His authority is never detached from His heart. He sends with purpose—make disciples—and with promise: "I am with you always."

Even when doubt lingers, His presence does not.

### Reflection Questions

What is one act of obedience You are inviting me into today?" Write it down and walk in it before noon.

Where am I hesitating to trust Him fully? Who is He inviting me to walk with more intentionally?

What would change if I truly believed He is with me—always?

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	Matt 28:18	Remind me that all authority belongs to You, Jesus.
DAY 3	Rom 1:16	Give me courage to not be ashamed of the gospel.
DAY 4	Col1:18	Help me recognize Your authority over every part of my life.
DAY 5	Luke 10:19	Teach me to walk in confidence under Your authority.
DAY 6	John 20:21	Send me as You were sent, with purpose and clarity.
DAY 7	Heb 4:16	Help me approach You with confidence and trust.

### Focus: Communicate

Proclamation is communicating the Good News to all people...

For years I struggled to share the gospel with those I most wanted to hear the good news. How would I communicate the truth? What if... it came out wrong? What if... What if... My focus was on all the ways I could get it wrong, and how I might look bad in their eyes. The fear of rejection loomed in my mind. BUT GOD... He reminded me of the truth... "For I am not ashamed of the GOSPEL, for it IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." - Romans 1:16. I was convicted of my vanity. I cared more about what other people thought about me rather than where my loved ones would spend eternity. God's Word never tells us we need to say things perfectly. Simply look at Moses. God's glory shone through Moses' imperfections as he obediently followed the Lord's leading. Proclamation is the substance of what is preached, rather than the act of preaching. I know the truth that set me free - it was God's Grace by faith alone in Christ alone & it was that same grace that was sufficient for me to be able to share the good news with those around me. As I prayed for opportunities to share the gospel with family members, God was faithful. Within a few months, I was given time with family members and friends from out of state, people who knew me before I was saved. In a 30 minute lunch conversation, I was able to ask my brother... "growing up in church, did you comprehend that Jesus died on that cross for ALL of our sin, that He went to the grave & overcame death, appearing to witnesses so we would know He was God?" With one question, the gospel was proclaimed and I was simply posing a question, trusting that God's power brings salvation to all who believe. Isaiah 55:11 reminds us that God's Word will not return to Him empty without accomplishing what He desires so share His Word freely and boldly...

### Reflection Questions

How has Jesus changed your life?

What has the Lord personally commanded you from His Word and how can you share that with someone in your life today?

How would you summarize, in one or two sentences, the hope that is in you? (1 Peter 3:15)

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	Col 4:5-6	Guide my words so they are gracious and wise.
DAY 3	1 Pet 3:15	Prepare me to share the hope I have in You.
DAY 4	2 Tim 2:24-25	Make me gentle and patient as I speak truth.
DAY 5	Pro 25:11	Help me speak the right words at the right time.
DAY 6	Acts 4:29	Give me boldness to speak Your word clearly.
DAY 7	Eph 4:29	Let my words build others up and point to You.

### Focus: Truth

Proclamation is articulating the power, fullness and truth of the Gospel

Logos (The Word of God) and Truth are both united in the Person of Jesus Christ. John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth." At the same time Christ also exudes power and fullness as we see in verses like Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the *power* of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek," and 1 Corinthians 1:18 "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the *power* of God," as well as Ephesians 3:19 "...that ye might be filled with all the *fullness* of God." These are just a few, but make clear that the truth of the Gospel brings believers into the fullness of God's life and love. Let's look at the concept of proclaiming the truth of the Gospel a little more closely using the account of the dialog between Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler found in Matthew 19:16-22 (Read this passage to familiarize yourself with this story). Jesus confronts this young man with an uncomfortable truth that we need to consider making part of our proclamation of the Gospel. In reading this passage, you may notice that the rich young ruler had the right motive and attitude, he came to the right source (Jesus) and asked the right questions. However, Jesus confronted him with some truths that exposed his pride, unwillingness to confess his guilt and unwillingness to submit to Christ. Part of our proclaiming the gospel must point out that we are sinful and have offended a holy God; this is not a popular message to proclaim in a world where we don't want to offend. When the reality of our sinful nature sinks in, drawing us to a place of repentance, we see our need for a savior whose death paid the price for our guilt...that's the Gospel, i.e., good news.

### Reflection Questions

Do you sometimes soften your proclamation of the Gospel by not bringing up the truth of our sinful nature and go right to the speaking of the great plan God has for someone's life through the power and fullness of the Gospel? Give an example of where you may (or may not) have upheld this truth and the resulting conversation.

Are you experiencing the power and fullness of the gospel, not just for your salvation, but for living, and then proclaiming it through your testimony? Think of God's omnipotence (all-powerfulness) and the inexhaustible resource that it is and how full your life is because of your relationship with Jesus.

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	John 14:6	Keep me grounded in the truth of who You are, Jesus.
DAY 3	2 Tim 3:16	Help me trust and rely on Your Word as truth.
DAY 4	Ps 119:160	Anchor me in the truth of Your Word.
DAY 5	1 Cor 1:18	Remind me of the power of the message of the cross.
DAY 6	John 8:32	Let Your truth set me free in how I live and speak.
DAY 7	Is 55:11	Use Your Word through me to accomplish Your purposes.

### **Focus: *Lifestyle***

Proclamation is the witness we provide by how we live

God called us to the good work of making disciples and being compelling witnesses, and this work inspires us to live a life honoring Him. Our lifestyle (at home, work, church), our actions, and our love for others testify to Christ's love and serve as a witness to proclaim the Good News and draw others to faith.

In Romans 12:2, Paul reminds us to be different from the world and live lifestyles that reflect our walk with Christ. We are called to show love and compassion and practice the very spiritual gifts our church is focusing on this year.

Living a lifestyle worthy of Christ's love for us isn't always easy. Yet, Paul goes on to say that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we can know what the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God is. How do we do this? The mind is changed through prayer, by reading and reflecting on God's Word, and by worship. As we consistently place ourselves in His presence, our thoughts begin to align with His truth, our hearts soften toward others, and our lifestyles begin to reflect His character.

Our daily choices, how we speak, respond, treat others, and love, become a living testimony. People may not always read the Bible, but they read our lives. Jesus told His disciples that their love for one another would reveal their belonging to Him. This countercultural love forgives quickly, serves quietly, and gives without expecting anything in return. It chooses humility over recognition and faithfulness over comfort. This lifestyle points others to God.

So today, let us ask the Lord to shape our lifestyles - our words, rhythms, reactions, and relationships. May our homes, workplaces, and church reflect His presence. As we walk closely with Him, our lives will naturally become a light that draws others toward His grace.

## Reflection Questions

In what ways do your daily habits and reactions (at church, work, home, online) reflect Christ to others?

What practices help renew your mind? Is there a particular practice you wish to be more intentional about?

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	Matt 5:16	Let my life shine in a way that points others to You.
DAY 3	Phil 1:27	Help me live a life worthy of the gospel.
DAY 4	Titus 2:7-8	Make my life an example of integrity and truth.
DAY 5	Jam 1:22	Help me live out Your Word, not just hear it.
DAY 6	1 Cor 10:31	Teach me to do everything for Your glory.
DAY 7	Gal 2:20	Live through me so others see You in my life.





# Forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

# [ FORGIVENESS ]

**WEEK 1**  
May 31–June 6

## Focus: Jesus

Forgiveness requires asking Jesus for help!

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!” ([Luke 23:34](#)) These words, spoken by Jesus from the cross, offer a glimpse into the immense weight of true forgiveness. Though completely innocent, Jesus chose to forgive the very people who were crucifying Him. Forgiveness is difficult—painfully so. Consider Joseph’s story. After being left for dead and sold into slavery by his own brothers, he was later presented with an unexpected opportunity for revenge. When those same brothers came to Egypt begging for food during a famine, Joseph could have had them executed instantly. Instead, he made the harder choice: he began the process of forgiving them. The word “begin” is used intentionally because forgiveness is often a journey, not simply a destination. Joseph struggled through this process; he wept, he tested his brothers by hiding gold in their sacks, he imprisoned one, and he demanded the presence of his youngest brother. Eventually, he confronted them, yet even then the process continued. In [Genesis 50](#), we see the culmination of this journey. After Jacob’s death, the brothers feared retribution and begged for Joseph’s mercy. Joseph’s famous reply was: “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” This is a vital question to ask ourselves when we struggle to forgive: “Am I in the place of God?” ([Matt 18:21-35](#)) Forgiveness is hard, but do we truly believe that God can redeem the trespasses we forgive to multiply life? Joseph’s statement directly foreshadows the Gospel. The most horrific event in history—the shameful, humiliating death of the innocent Son of God—was the outward manifestation of the wrath He suffered for our sins. Yet, the darkest day became the only hope for humanity, and millions have since experienced new life in His name. His death brought us life, and His resurrection ensures that we, too, will one day rise. “... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” ([Hebrews 9:22](#)). Love is easiest to see when it is hardest to give. Christ chose the path of love and forgiveness, and He calls us to follow Him. Let’s walk that path together. We won’t be alone.

# [ FORGIVENESS ]

**WEEK 1**  
May 31–June 6

## Reflection Questions

Based on personal experience, why do you think forgiveness is so hard?

Consider a time when forgiveness was/still is a journey for you. Briefly share about what happened and what you learned on the way.

Have you ever reflected on the example of Christ during a hard part of your forgiveness journey? Describe that reflection.

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	Luke 23:34	Help me forgive like You did, even when it's hard.
DAY 3	Eph 4:32	Teach me to forgive as You have forgiven me.
DAY 4	Col 3:13	Give me grace to bear with others and forgive.
DAY 5	Is 53:5	Remind me of the cost of my forgiveness.
DAY 6	Heb 10:14	Thank You that Your sacrifice was once for all.
DAY 7	1 Jn 1:9	Help me receive Your forgiveness fully.

# [ FORGIVENESS ]

WEEK 2

June 7-13

## Focus: How many times?!

Forgiveness can be a long and hard process

When Jesus told Peter to forgive his brother, who continues to sin against him, not seven times, but seventy times seven (Matt. 18:21-22), I wonder how Peter felt. It does sound compelling to forgive someone who keeps offending you limitlessly, constantly, and without keeping count, in light of the mercy we have received in Christ. We don't get to see Peter's response or what objections were going through his head and heart, but maybe his struggle to obey Jesus' exhortation was much like my own.

Like Peter, I have experienced the hurt of being repeatedly sinned against and have suffered the deep pain inflicted by a loved one's persistent wrong choices. For me it has been equally frustrating and confusing to forgive, whether my offender is caught in a cycle of sin and repentance, or whether he/she is racing headlong into sin, with no regard for the destruction it is causing. Despite my best efforts to be merciful and long-suffering, the unceasing assaults were disorienting to my relationship with my brother and with God. I felt trapped in a vortex of offense and forgiveness, not able to reconcile ongoing sin with God's justice. The cry, "How many times?" echoed in my heart as this constant cycle left me feeling numb to my brother and to God, who seemed indifferent to the sin and suffering.

Through His Word, God rescued me from my disillusionment and reoriented me to his perspective on sin and forgiveness. In Psalm 56:8, I was reminded that God "keeps count of my tossings and puts my tears in a bottle"; He notices, validates, and remembers every sorrow and pain caused by sin. Instead of pursuing forgiveness by minimizing, excusing, or forgetting the pain of an offense, I found comfort in knowing that God sees and cares deeply about every wound. And yet, even in light of the severity of our sin and suffering, with God there is plentiful redemption (Psalm 130:7). When I happened upon those words, they struck me in a new way, as if I had never read them before. Through Jesus, I and my brother are offered never-ending, never running out forgiveness. My perspective of forgiveness shifted from a command to be obeyed to a Gospel proclamation. I will not forget, after years of being caught in the confusing pursuit of forgiveness, when I detected a Spirit-driven heart shift and was able to wholeheartedly declare to my brother, though still hampered by his old self, that God's forgiveness, and mine too, is offered abundantly and without limits.

# [ FORGIVENESS ]

**WEEK 2**

June 7-13

## Reflection Questions

What are your heart objections to Jesus' mandate to extend unlimited forgiveness to "that person" in your life?

When you get stuck in the process of forgiveness, where does your attention get focused - on your hurt, on the offender, or on your perception God's activity in the situation?

Do you tend to approach forgiveness as a command to be obeyed or as a properly weighted assessment of the severity of sin balanced with the Gospel proclamation of redemption?

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	Matt 18:21-22	Help me choose forgiveness again and again.
DAY 3	Luke 17:3-4	Give me strength to forgive repeatedly.
DAY 4	Rom 12:17-18	Help me pursue peace instead of holding grudges.
DAY 5	Pro 19:11	Teach me to overlook offenses with wisdom.
DAY 6	Ps 86:5	Remind me that You are abundant in forgiveness.
DAY 7	Matt 6:12	Help me forgive others as I ask You to forgive me.

# [ FORGIVENESS ]

**WEEK 3**

June 14-20

## **Focus: *Ongoing***

Forgiveness may take a lifetime

John Chrysostom preached a series of homilies from the Gospel of Matthew in the late third century AD, and in one said: "Nothing makes us so like God as our readiness to forgive the wicked and wrongdoers." We are in week three of our focus on the practice of forgiveness, and if you are anything like me, it has been H-A-R-D to do!! Jesus said it could take seventy-seven (or seven times seven in another reading). If you have the time, stop and count to seventy-seven right now. If you don't have the time, well, that's the point. Even with inflation being as it's been the past couple of years, seventy-seven is a significant number--especially when you think about the incredibly difficult process of forgiveness being multiplied by that number! The Chrysostom quote helped me focus on something else, though. Rather than the number of times I need to forgive, it recentered me on the goal of forgiveness--becoming more like Jesus Christ. And, what do we know about becoming like Jesus Christ? It takes a lifetime (Phil 1:6; 3:12-14; 2 Cor 3:18). Thankfully for us, Jesus' work on the cross accomplished forgiveness for whomever would place their faith in Him once and for all (Rom 6:10; Heb 10:10). God's forgiveness is a "one and done" as they say. But for us mere mortals, we seek to become more like him through the journey--the kind that takes a lifetime to get right. And that includes forgiving others. I believe that Jesus responded to Peter's question of "seven times!?" by essentially saying, "no, Peter...closer to a lifetime. This is not to say that we, humans, can't forgive others fully on this side of heaven. We can. Maybe you have. But, I also think we need to stay encouraged if it takes a long time and many tries to get it right. We would do well to remember that struggle to do so is not wasted, rather redeemed by God, who is making us into His image more and more each day.

# [ FORGIVENESS ]

**WEEK 3**

June 14-20

## Reflection Questions

Take a moment and reflect on Jesus' forgiveness of your sins on the cross. How does it make you feel?

In what ways can your struggle to forgive someone else contribute to your spiritual growth?

Think of one or two people with whom you are still in the process of forgiveness. What does Jesus think about their sin against you?

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	2 Cor 4:16	Renew my heart daily as I continue forgiving.
DAY 3	Lam 3:22-23	Remind me that Your mercies are new every morning.
DAY 4	Heb 12:15	Guard my heart from bitterness taking root.
DAY 5	Rom 8:1	Help me live free from condemnation.
DAY 6	Phil 3:13	Teach me to let go of what's behind.
DAY 7	Ps 147:3	Heal the places in me that still hurt.

# [ FORGIVENESS ]

**WEEK 4**

June 21-27

## **Focus: You**

Forgiveness primarily benefits the offended—not the offender

Forgiveness often feels like something we offer for the sake of others—a way to let them off the hook for what they've done. Yet in God's kingdom, forgiveness is primarily a gift for the forgiver.

When we hold on to bitterness, it doesn't punish the one who hurt us—it poisons our own heart. Anger and resentment quietly build walls within us and keep us from experiencing the peace that God longs to give us. The longer we hold on, the heavier it becomes. But when we forgive, those walls fall. The chains loosen. Freedom begins.

Jesus taught this clearly: "For if you forgive other people their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 6:14). Forgiveness doesn't excuse the offense—it entrusts justice to God. It says, "Lord, I release this person to You. I will no longer carry what You never asked me to hold."

Think of Joseph in Genesis. Betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, and forgotten in prison—he had every reason to hate. Yet when he finally faced those same brothers years later, he forgave them, saying, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20). Forgiveness allowed Joseph to see God's hand in his story. It turned pain into purpose.

The truth is, forgiveness is not a feeling—it's a choice. Sometimes it's a daily choice. But every time we choose to forgive, we step deeper into the peace and freedom Christ purchased for us on the cross. Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for forgiving me when I didn't deserve it.

Help me to forgive others as freely as You forgave me.

Release the bitterness and pain in my heart and replace it with Your peace. Teach me to trust You with justice and to walk in the freedom that forgiveness brings.

In Christ's name, Amen.

**Takeaway Thought:** Forgiveness doesn't change the past—but it transforms your heart for the future.

# [ FORGIVENESS ]

**WEEK 4**

June 21-27

## Reflection Questions

How would you characterize your "approach" to scripture reading as a Christian?

How does "gratitude" play a role in your understanding of God's Word?

How would you encourage someone who is struggling with connecting to God through the Scripture?

	SCRIPTURE	PRAYER
DAY 2	Matt 6:14	Help me forgive others so I can walk in freedom.
DAY 3	Rom 12:19	Teach me to trust You with justice.
DAY 4	Ps 103:12	Thank You for removing my sins completely.
DAY 5	Luke 6:37	Help me release others without holding on.
DAY 6	Col 3:15	Let Your peace rule in my heart.
DAY 7	John 8:36	Help me live in the freedom You have given me.



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