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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Looking Ahead - Don't Get Screwed

September 21, 2025

Hebrews 12:15

Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.

We reflected on this verse last week as we considered how gossip is like fertilizer, accelerating the growth of bitterness within us. But how often do we really consider the effects of bitterness in our lives and relationships?

The writer of Hebrews describes bitterness as a poison. We think we can just hide it away, but the truth is that if we allow it to grow, it ruins us and everyone around us. It consumes us like a toxin.

So, what do we do when we are bitter toward someone who hurt us? What is the antidote?

This week, we'll examine how forgiveness heals hurt and cures bitterness. The truth is - we can't forgive on our own. We must first know and understand the depth of God's forgiveness and what it cost. Because forgiveness *is* costly. It's free for the receiver, but the forgiver absorbs the cost of the hurt and surrenders the need for retaliation. Nowhere do we see that more clearly than in God's grace toward us. His forgiveness is free for us, but Jesus paid the price.

Forgiveness is hard, especially when we're hurting, but we can rejoice in the fact that God so freely forgives us. Let's join together to ask him to soften our hearts and unclench our grip on bitterness so that we can forgive like he does.

Discussion Questions:

Ice Breaker: List some qualities you think characterize a forgiving person. Which ones do you embody well? Which ones are more of a challenge?

If we as a church practiced forgiveness more openly, what would change about how our community thinks about Christians?

Read Matthew 18:21-25: Peter asks Jesus a question: how often should we forgive someone? What does Peter's guess reveal about his expectations for forgiveness, and how does Jesus' answer upend those expectations?

How do you react to the fact that Jesus always expects us to forgive?

Reflect and Respond: Consider the ways that bitterness and unforgiveness show up in your life. Write down a prayer naming those things to God and asking him to help you surrender them to him.

Prayer:

Lord, I praise you for the fact that your forgiveness is limitless. I admit that I often attach conditions and limitations to my own forgiveness. Please make forgiveness a pattern in my life with no strings attached. Help me to let go of bitterness in my heart so that I can receive your guidance to forgive this week. In Jesus' name, amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Romans 12:17-18

Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

This post was written by Ashley Allen, a Content Development intern at CedarCreek and Findlay attendee.

You Hold the Key - Don't Get Screwed

September 22, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: 1 Corinthians 16

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"

Peter thought he was being generous by suggesting forgiveness seven times. In his culture, three times was considered sufficient, so seven must have seemed more than enough. But Jesus shattered that expectation. Forgiveness, he explained, isn't about keeping score. It's about living in a continual rhythm of mercy.

Jesus told a parable in Matthew 18:21-35 that explained God's mercy. A servant owed his king an impossible debt, one he could never repay in a thousand lifetimes. When the king ordered justice, the servant fell to his knees and begged for patience. Filled with compassion, the king didn't extend the deadline; he canceled the debt entirely. That's the gospel. Our Heavenly King cancels the debt of sin we could never pay back on our own.

The forgiven servant immediately found a fellow servant who owed him only a small amount. Instead of showing the same mercy he had just received, he demanded repayment and threw the man in prison. When the king heard, his response was piercing:

Matthew 18:33

“Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?”

The contrast is staggering. The man who was released from a mountain of debt refused to forgive a pebble-sized offense. That’s the tragedy of unforgiveness. It blinds us to the mercy we’ve already received and chains us to bitterness that poisons our relationships and limits our future. Jesus’ story reminds us that when we cling to resentment, we’re like prisoners holding the keys to our own cell but refusing to use them.

Every time we replay the offense, every time we clutch the pain instead of releasing it, we rattle the chains that keep us stuck. Forgiveness is the act of unlocking the door. It doesn’t erase the hurt or deny the cost. It opens the way for the healing, freedom, and peace only God can provide.

Forgiveness may feel impossible when the wound runs deep. Yet it’s in that very pain where God’s power shows up. He is breaking chains, healing hearts, and writing a new future we could never step into while clinging to the past.

Questions:

Where in your life are you still holding onto an offense instead of unlocking the door to freedom through forgiveness?

How does remembering the mountain of debt God has forgiven in you change the way you see the pebble-sized debts others owe you?

What step can you take this week to begin releasing bitterness and allowing God’s healing power to write a new future in your life?

Next Steps:

Write down one person or situation from your past that still weighs on you. Pray, asking God to help you forgive, not once, but as often as it takes. When you are ready and if it is possible, connect with that person for resolution.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for canceling the debt of sin I could never repay. Your mercy is greater than I can fully comprehend, yet I often hold onto the smaller debts others owe me. Lord, I don't want to live in the prison of unforgiveness any longer. Today, I place my pain, my hurt, and my anger in your healing hands. Give me the courage to unlock the door and step into freedom. Fill my heart with your mercy so I can extend it to others, just as you have poured it out on me. Break the chains of bitterness, heal my heart, and write a new future for me through the power of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:**Romans 12:17-18**

Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

This post was written by Monique Myers, a Perrysburg attendee and regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.

The Call to Forgive - Don't Get Screwed

September 23, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: 2 Corinthians 1

I know we've been talking about forgiving people for their wrongdoings, but my struggle is with circumstances. I lose my peace when a situation or fact of life becomes unacceptable to me, and there is little or nothing I can do to correct it. Sometimes I wonder if I suffer from a generational curse!

Have you ever felt you carried a curse? Or, maybe you've felt you earned the right to have a vengeful attitude. There must be someone to blame for the pain!

Genesis 4:23-24

One day Lamech said to Adah and Zillah, "Listen to me, my wives. I have killed a youth who attacked and wounded me." If anyone who kills Cain is to be punished seven times, anyone who takes revenge against me will be punished seventy-seven times!"

Cain was Lamech's great, great, great, great grandfather. Yes, *that* Cain - Adam and Eve's first son who murdered his own brother out of jealousy. God banished Cain as punishment, but he also mercifully protected Cain from those who meant him harm (Genesis 4:13-15).

Lamech was a violent man who bragged about making others pay for hurting him, surpassing even God's vengeance on those who wronged Cain. We all want to take

matters into our own hands and pay back pain with pain, but Jesus calls us to live differently. He calls us to forgive.

We have to remember that God is in control despite the brokenness we encounter in the people and circumstances in our lives. What we see as an offense is an opportunity to forgive. We weren't meant to strive for power and vengeance, like Lamech.

We have to reconcile what we feel in our heart with what we think in our head.

- **Start Inward:** Name the debt or offense that needs forgiveness.
- **Move Upward:** Take it to God in prayer, in light of what Jesus has done for you.
- **Share Outward:** Begin to forgive as you have been forgiven.

Stop carrying the unforgiveness, regrets, and limitations of the past - let it go! Take to heart these words in the Lord's Prayer, "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12 NIV).

The bottom line: *if you don't allow God to help you with your past, you will be limited in your future.* If you still have breath in your lungs, it's not too late, and God isn't done with you!

Questions:

Have you ever considered carefully what the words in the Lord's Prayer mean to you personally?

Are you suffering from a hurt that needs to be named, taken to God, and forgiven?

Next Steps:

Study the Lord's Prayer, and ask God to show you what it means.

Read Genesis Chapter 4 to learn more about Cain and Abel and Lamech's connection to them.

Begin the 3-step process of forgiveness by naming your hurts and taking them to God in prayer.

Prayer:

Lord, I praise you for being a loving, kind, and forgiving God. Help me to accept my responsibility in circumstances and relationships. Help me to let go of past mistakes and failures and the damage that was left in their wake. Clear the past to reconcile my heart and mind - to name, move, and share that which holds me back. Allow me to set the boundaries that lead to freedom from unforgiveness, and help me restore and renew relationships that can be life giving. It is by your will and in your name I pray, amen.

Series Theme Verse:**Romans 12:17-18**

Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

This post was written by Julie Estep, a Perrysburg attendee and regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.

Rejoicing in Freedom - Don't Get Screwed

September 24, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: 2 Corinthians 2

It isn't hard for most of us to imagine struggling to pay off an enormous debt. Now imagine someone coming up to you and telling you it's fully and completely forgiven. Who wouldn't rejoice at that instant relief and gratitude?!

As Christ followers, we are similarly called to live every moment of our lives as an expression of our gratitude and relief toward Jesus, the one who forgave us from our eternal debts.

Since the day we were born, every single one of us has sinned, arguably several times per day. Although we are called to be like Christ, it is human nature to sin. Thankfully, we do not need to fear or live in shame anymore, because God himself loves us so much that he came down to earth to save us from eternal separation and condemnation.

John 3:16

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

God sacrificed his only son on the cross for us as a payment for our sins – past, present, and future. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. The beautiful thing is that we do not have to do anything to earn his love. It's available to anyone who believes and confesses he is Lord.

Think of how great God's love is for each of us! Even though we don't deserve his kindness and forgiveness, he washes each of us clean every day. Through forgiveness comes freedom. It is when we recognize and accept that God has cancelled our debt that we experience true freedom.

This forgiveness is at the center of our Christian faith, but I think that a lot of us forget this very basic truth and how powerful it is to live from. We can be at peace with God every day, letting go of any remnants of our human feelings of guilt and shame.

Rejoice in your freedom - your debt has been canceled!

Questions:

Where have you seen God's forgiveness in your life?

How can we spread God's love and forgiveness to others?

Next Steps:

Join a Group to connect with likeminded Christ followers and celebrate God's gifts together each week.

Share the Good News of Jesus Christ with someone in your life this week.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for your wonderful gift of forgiveness. Thank you for releasing me from my sin, guilt, and shame through the blood of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help me to remember each day that you have set me free to live boldly for you. Help me share this love and forgiveness with those you have placed in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Romans 12:17-18

Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

This post was written by Isabelle Billnitzer, a Perrysburg attendee and regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.

Forgiveness is a Command - Don't Get Screwed

September 25, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: 2 Corinthians 3

Forgiveness is more than a choice - it's a command from Jesus.

Matthew 6:12 NIV

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

This verse was written by the Apostle Matthew to both Jewish and Gentile Christians. It is part of the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus used to instruct his disciples how to pray. He used the term *debts and debtors* because his first century followers would have understood the process of owing and paying back debt.

Forgiveness is at the very heart of what it means to be a Christ follower. It is a choice we make in our heads, though it comes from our hearts. The choice to forgive others is what helps to heal our own internal hurts. We live in a sin-filled world, but by forgiving others we can demonstrate how God continues to forgive us.

Matthew 6:12 emphasizes the reciprocal nature of forgiveness. We reflect God's forgiveness when we choose to forgive others' sins. The "Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor" in Matthew 18:21-35 serves as a great example. The king felt pity for the servant who owed millions of dollars in debt, so he forgave him. "But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment" (Matthew 18:28). The forgiven man did not extend the king's mercy to his fellow servant.

Unfortunately, forgiveness can be a difficult process, and it does not always lead to reconciliation. It takes two people to reconcile, but it takes only one person to forgive. And that is the choice that Jesus encourages us to make. Our willingness to forgive is evidence that we are living in God's Kingdom.

The lyrics to **"Forgiveness" by Matthew West** say it well:

It's the hardest thing to give away

And the last thing on your mind today...

It flies in the face of all your pride

It moves away the mad inside...

Forgiveness, forgiveness

I want to finally set it free

So show me how to see what your mercy sees

Help me now to give what you gave to me

Forgiveness, forgiveness

We must recognize that we need forgiveness before we can forgive others. Are you extending our King's mercy and grace to your fellow servants?

Questions:

Is it difficult for you to forgive others? Why or why not?

How much would it cost you to forgive others? Is it worth it? Why?

Next Steps:

Listen to "[Forgiveness](#)" by Matthew West for a beautiful way to define forgiveness.

Make a list of the people whom you are struggling to forgive. Knowing that forgiveness is for the benefit of all, by prayer and petition, ask God for guidance and healing during the process. Once you choose to forgive someone, journal how it makes you feel.

Prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of forgiveness. Help me to understand how pivotal forgiveness is in my relationship with you and others. Please grant your intervention to help me forgive others. Thank you for the grace you offer me every day. Help me to extend that to others. It's in Jesus' name that I pray, amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Romans 12:17-18

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This post was written by Jenn Macke, a Findlay attendee, and a regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.

Forgiveness: The Best Witness - Don't Get Screwed

September 26, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: 2 Corinthians 4

Colossians 3:13

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

For Jesus followers, forgiveness is a powerful testimony to the work of God in our lives. Because God has given us forgiveness through the death of Jesus, it is only natural that those who follow Jesus live out God's forgiveness in how they forgive others.

Yes, forgiveness doesn't always *feel* natural. Honestly, it's not supposed to. It goes against our human nature, which seeks revenge on instinct. Without the transformative work of God in our lives, we'd be forever captive to the cycle of payback and vengeance. Praise God that he gives us freedom from that cycle and empowers us to forgive!

But have you ever considered how your forgiveness might transform *others*?

When I was in middle school, I heard a sermon on forgiveness that I'll never forget. I was sitting with my parents on Sunday morning (my sister and I were the only kids our age in our very small church, so no youth service!), and I was a bit sleepy listening to the pastor teach. But then he said, "Forgiveness is the best witness for Jesus you could ever make."

It hit me like a bolt of lightning. *Wait a second*, I wondered. *I thought being a witness for Jesus was about the words I say. How is forgiveness better than that?*

The pastor went on to explain that, when someone who doesn't know Jesus receives forgiveness from a Christian, it's so counter-cultural that it often catches them off guard. That person can't help but ask, "After what I did to you ... why didn't you seek revenge? Why would you forgive me?" And that opens an opportunity for Jesus followers to explain what it is that makes them different: knowing Jesus.

That message first taught me what we've learned together this week: forgiveness is powerful evidence that we live in God's Kingdom. When we forgive others, it introduces them to Jesus unlike anything else we could do.

Questions:

Who in your life could you introduce to Jesus through the power of forgiveness? What would it take to do so?

Next Steps:

Write down the name of the person (or people) you thought of from the question above and the things you felt led to do. Pray and ask God for an opportunity to point the individual(s) to Jesus through your forgiveness this week. Without sharing details, ask someone you trust to hold you accountable to taking those steps.

Prayer:

God, I thank you that the power of forgiveness starts with how you've forgiven me. Remind me of the freedom I have in your forgiveness, and help me to live it out by forgiving others. Please teach me how to forgive in a way that introduces people to Jesus. I ask that my forgiveness would impact those in my life who don't know you yet, that it would make them curious about you, and that it would facilitate a conversation about you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Series Theme Verse:**Romans 12:17-18**

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This post was written by Ashley Allen, a Content Development intern at CedarCreek and Findlay attendee.

Reflections - Don't Get Screwed

September 27, 2025

As we've learned about forgiveness this week, many of us have our own stories of hurt that we've been wrestling with. Healing may seem impossible because the wounds are too fresh and painful. When the pain runs that deep, it just feels too hard to forgive.

If that's you, know you're not alone. God sees you, and his heart hurts for you in the brokenness you're experiencing. And Jesus knows what it's like to have to forgive in the midst of pain. In fact, if anyone had a reason not to forgive, it was Jesus.

Think about it. Jesus was wrongfully arrested, tortured, and executed by people who hated him. His closest friends betrayed and abandoned him, and he felt forsaken by God. We can't even imagine the weight of his pain. But as his life expired on the cross, Jesus did what seemed completely unthinkable. He prayed a prayer of forgiveness.

Luke 23:34a:

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."

Jesus could have prayed for God's vengeance on those who were killing him. But instead, he chose to pray that God would forgive them. He sets an example for us by forgiving what by all appearances should have been unforgivable.

Jesus understands that forgiveness is often the hardest thing we ever have to do. So when he instructs us to forgive, he doesn't stop there. He also models forgiveness for us so that we can look to him for guidance. He understands, and he's always there to help us choose forgiveness.

Prayer:

Jesus, I am in awe of your love. Thank you for showing me how to forgive, even during suffering. Please help me to follow your example of forgiveness. When I struggle to forgive those who hurt me, remind me of your prayer on the cross. Help me remember that you are with me in my pain, and empower me to forgive like you did. I love you and praise you for your unfailing forgiveness. Amen.

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