Hard Love
Forgiveness
Troy Knight

Key Scripture:

Matthew 5:7 (NLT)
7 God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Romans 12:19 (NLT)
19 Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

"I will take revenge;
I will pay them back,"
says the LORD.

John 17:20–23 (NLT)
20 "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.
21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.
22 "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. 23 I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.

Colossians 3:13 (NLT)
13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

TALK IT OVER

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- What is the most intense, petty, or ridiculous sports rivalry you have ever been a part of or witnessed?

Start sharing. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- What makes the definition of forgiveness as "letting go of the offense" so difficult to accept? In what ways is setting up healthy boundaries different from holding onto bitterness?

- **Read Matthew 5:7.** Why is remembering your own need for grace the best way to start forgiving someone else? How does extending mercy to others guarantee that you will receive mercy from God when you inevitably fail?

- **Read John 17:20-23.** What drove Jesus to pray for our unity right before He went to the cross? How does choosing to forgive another believer demonstrate the Gospel message to the watching world?

- **Read Colossians 3:13.** How does holding onto an offense end up harming you more than the person who actually hurt you? What area of your life is currently being robbed of joy because you are harboring unforgiveness?

- **Read Romans 12:19**. What causes us to forfeit the blessings of God by trying to take revenge into our own hands? How can you better trust God to handle your offenders rather than defending yourself?

- Why is forgiveness often so much harder within our own family? What offense do you need to release today so you stop living as a victim and start living freely as a child of God?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Identify one person you're holding a grudge against. Write down your own sins in a journal this week to remind yourself of exactly how much God has forgiven you, and make the choice to release their offense.

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Father, thank You for perfectly demonstrating forgiveness by sending Jesus to pay the punishment for our sins. Break our pride, remove our desire for revenge, and give us the power of the Holy Spirit to forgive those who have deeply hurt us. Help us fight for unity in our church and families so the world will clearly see Your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Devotional

The Poison of Unforgiveness

In this week's message, Pastor Troy taught that forgiveness is not pretending you weren't hurt, but actively making the hard choice to let go of an offense. Our flesh constantly craves revenge, but the Bible makes it clear that holding onto bitterness is spiritual poison.

Why does God command us to forgive, even when the pain runs deep?

1. Forgiven People Forgive People

The greatest motivation for forgiveness is looking at the cross. Colossians 3:13 commands, “Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” If we truly understand the massive, unpayable debt of sin that God wiped clean for us through the blood of Jesus Christ, we lose the right to hold others hostage for their sins against us. As Pastor Troy noted, recognizing our own daily need for mercy is the fastest way to extend mercy to others.

2. Bitterness Destroys the Vessel

When we refuse to forgive, we think we are punishing the person who hurt us. In reality, we are drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. Hate destroys the vessel in which it is stored. Unforgiveness robs us of our peace, wrecks our relationship with God, and leaves us miserable. Releasing the offense isn't just about obeying God; it is the only way to free yourself from the emotional prison of being a victim.

3. Leaving Justice to the Righteous Judge

Forgiveness does not mean the offender gets away with it. Romans 12:19 says, “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath.” God is perfectly just, and He sees every wrong done to you. When we take matters into our own hands, we forfeit the righteous justice of God and the blessings He wants to pour out on our lives. We are called to step out of the judge's seat and trust that God will defend our honor and handle the scales of justice perfectly.

Reflection:

Are you secretly harboring resentment toward someone, hoping they will suffer for what they did? How does trusting God as the ultimate, perfect Judge free you to finally release the offense and experience peace?

Adapted directly from GotQuestions.org: Why do we need to forgive others?