Week 2
Bible Study Companion Leader: Wendy Blight

(Editor’s note & content advisory: We are mindful today’s lesson might stir up emotions for anyone who’s survived intense trauma. We pray you are encouraged by Wendy’s message.)

Hey friends. So excited to spend the second week of our Bible Study Companion journey with you! Today, we’ll delve into a good, but hard, topic. I’m praying as I write this for the Lord to humble and tender our hearts so He can do a healing work in areas where we may harbor or struggle with forgiveness.

**Today’s Focus:** Choosing Forgiveness

Some of the messiest parts of our lives stem from refusing to extend forgiveness. A few days after my college graduation, I entered my apartment to find an armed, masked man waiting for me at the top of the stairs. He spent that afternoon sexually assaulting me.

Though I never saw his face, I became obsessed with punishing him. I believed I knew who it was and wanted him to pay. However, we were unable to proceed with a criminal prosecution against this man due to insufficient evidence, so we pursued a different route. I contacted the university and asked for a hearing. We had sufficient testimony from several co-eds, along with mine, to have him expelled from the university.

I hoped that would satisfy me, but it didn’t. I continued to monitor his whereabouts. I wanted him punished for what he did to me. I could not forget.

My grandmother faithfully called me throughout this time, encouraging me to forgive my attacker. I couldn’t believe she would ask this of me and felt she had no idea what she was asking. But one day, she told me I would never heal if I continued to harbor unforgiveness in my heart.

How could I ever forgive the heinous acts he committed against me?

I found the answers in God’s Word ... in Jesus’ words. Will you read them with me?

**Read Luke 23:34.**

What did Jesus ask His Father with regard to those who mocked Him, tortured Him and nailed Him to a cross?
Read Mark 15:33-37.

Write the words Jesus spoke when His tortured body and crushed spirit could stand it no more (v. 34)?

Oh, friend, Jesus’ last words pierce my heart. The pain. The betrayal. The rejection. The loneliness. The separation from His Father He knew was coming. All poured out in those nine words. And, the beauty in this moment is that our Savior endured it all for us. For you and for me. He took the sin that should have been ours and placed it upon Himself.

Jesus’ selfless act of love brings us to this question:

If Jesus asked His Father to forgive the men who nailed Him to the cross … if Jesus, the sinless One, took our sin upon Himself … what right do we have to withhold forgiveness from anyone? What right did I have to withhold forgiveness from the man who raped me?

I, like the author of Love Life Again, Tracie Miles, have learned along this journey that forgiveness is a choice. A hard choice. A choice God commands us to make.

But knowing and doing are two different things. I knew what I had to do, but every time I sat down to pray a prayer of forgiveness, I felt sick. If I forgave that man, it felt like he’d be getting away with what he did to me. I wanted to see him suffer. I wanted him to hurt the way I did. I begged God; surely there’s another way.

Have you been there? Does a name come to mind? Write that person’s name below:

I wasn’t ready that day. Or the months and years following that day. But, one day, I knew. I finally knew what I had to do. God took me to the story Tracie shares in her Love Life Again book on page 87. We’ll read that chapter later this week. In it, Tracie talks about Matthew 18 where one of the disciples asked Jesus how many times we are to forgive. God then took me to more passages.
Read them with me.

Colossians 3:12-13  
Ephesians 4:32  
Mark 11:25  
Leviticus 19:18  
Romans 12:19  

What do these verses speak to your heart about forgiveness?


Why are we to forgive?


I heard God. But, I didn’t feel it. How could I make my heart feel forgiveness? God taught me that **forgiveness isn’t about feeling. It’s a deliberate choice that has to be made.** And, I couldn’t make that choice until I changed my heart. God led me to more verses.

**Read them with me.**

Philippians 2:5-8  
Matthew 11:29  
Ephesians 4:1-3

What do you learn from these passages?


Forgiveness doesn’t come naturally.
As we proceed through the lesson, remember, **today is a divine appointment with your heavenly Father.** Prayerfully invite Him to be at work in your heart as you ponder this question:

Do you harbor unforgiveness in your heart against the person listed above? Share why.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Friend, as I wrote this lesson, please know I’ve prayed for you to submit, soften and humble your heart. God has a word *for* you, and a work He wants to do *in* you. He wants to set you free!

If you answered yes to the question above, what’s keeping you from extending forgiveness?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

As you sit before the Lord with this person’s name on your heart, remember what we’ve learned. Forgiveness is not an option. It’s a command. Period. But, it’s our choice whether we obey that command.

As you invite God to help you move toward forgiveness, consider these three truths...

1.) In forgiving, God is not asking us to forget our pain. The injustice. The betrayal. The hurt. What He’s asking is that we trust Him to exact justice.

**Read the verses below.**

Psalm 7:11  
Romans 12:17-19
What do you learn about God, justice and vengeance?

When we forgive, we’re not giving our offender a pass. We’re handing him or her over to the only One who can exact true justice.

2.) In forgiving, we’re reminded of how much God has forgiven us. We talked about this earlier in our lesson.

3.) In forgiving, we protect ourselves from the tragic consequences of living with a heart entangled in bitterness and unforgiveness.

Read the passages below.

Ephesians 4:26-27
Hebrews 12:15

What warnings do Paul and the author of Hebrews give? What happens when we harbor anger and unforgiveness?

Satan uses our anger to draw us farther from the heart of our Abba Father and to establish a root of bitterness in our hearts.

We have two choices here. We can go to God, give Him the hurt and take steps toward forgiveness, OR we can resist God, hold on to the hurt, and face the consequences. Choice number two ensures bitterness will fester, take root, and entwine its ugly tentacles around our hearts that will infect every aspect of our lives.

The only antidote is to invite God’s grace and humility, rather than bitterness, to flow through us.

I’ll never forget that day I sat on my living room sofa, talking to a man I couldn’t see or feel or touch, yet I forgave him. I didn’t know the depth of seething hatred and bitterness that consumed my heart until I spoke the words, “I forgive you.” Cleansing tears flooded my
cheeks. They came so hard and fast; I could hardly breathe. I forgave. All he did. Everything he stole. And then a precious peace fell upon me.

Remember what I said as we began today? You didn’t come to our lesson today by accident. God drew you here. He wants to minister to that unforgiving place in your heart. Will you yield that place to your Abba Father today?

I’ve written a prayer to help us get started. One you can personalize and pray. I encourage you to make it your first step toward forgiveness.

*Heavenly Father, Your grace amazes me. Thank You that when I was a rebel and a sinner, You died on Calvary for me. Thank You for suffering pain, humiliation and rejection. For taking my sin upon Yourself. Thank You that Your sacrifice was sufficient to forgive all my sin. I know my unforgiving heart toward __________ has grieved Your heart. Forgive me for harboring this bitterness. This unforgiveness. For not extending grace the way You did to me. You know my hurt. My shame. My humiliation. My rejection. My wounds. You know how __________ has hurt me. Humble my heart to forgive. Give me a willingness and a desire to forgive as You forgave me. Give me the strength to take this hard step. I trust You with __________. I leave my pain and hurt at the foot of the cross. As I take this step of obedience, begin Your healing work in my heart and my mind. Take away my selfish thoughts. My hate-filled thoughts. The hard memories. The hurtful words. Fill me with everything that is good. With Your thoughts of what is excellent, lovely, pure and praiseworthy. I ask all this in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Friend, thank you for spending this time with me. I know it wasn’t easy, but God will bless your courage and obedience. I’m praising God for the work He’s doing in your hearts as we study His Word together. Now, let’s dive into the rest of our week on forgiveness, meeting up with Study Leader Trish on the blog and author Tracie Miles in chapters four and five in *Love Life Again*, so He can continue His work. If you’d like a suggested study plan to follow, check out the Week 2 section of our *Week at a Glance* resource.