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# breakthroughs

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**finding freedom and true  
fulfillment in Jesus**

## Lesson 9: Receiving Forgiveness

The focus of this week's lesson is receiving forgiveness. Next week our focus will be on extending forgiveness.

Before we begin this week's lesson, I need to confess how inadequate I feel to write this lesson. I have depended heavily on God to write each lesson but this particular topic takes my dependency on Him to an entirely different level. Writing about God's forgiveness is difficult because it means writing about His love for us, His pursuit of us, His sacrifice, His grace, His power, His Cross. I am convinced that the more we receive God's forgiveness, the less we will run after 'little gods' and struggle with darkness. It is God's forgiveness that reveals His heart to us, which is what our hearts desperately crave.

*Please take a moment and ask God to open your heart and mind to what He wants you to receive through this week's lesson. Ask God to help you receive more than what I can possibly write in one lesson about His forgiveness.*

To begin this week's lesson, please write down how you would describe forgiveness.

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The Biblical **definition of forgiveness** is "a term used to indicate pardon for a fault or offense; to excuse without payment for a debt owed; completely put aside an offense and a debt owed."

Did you notice that forgiveness does not require payment from the one who committed an offense and needs to be forgiven? Did you also notice that forgiveness completely, not partially, cancels a debt owed? What this definition of forgiveness is

telling us is that 1) we cannot do anything to earn forgiveness and 2) forgiveness is complete.

The things we do that hurt ourselves and others are what the Bible calls “sin.” Sin actually means “to miss the mark.” God has a plan for us and teaches us how to follow His plan for our lives. When we don’t follow God’s plan for our lives, or we don’t follow His plan in the way He tells us to follow, we “miss the mark.” Obviously, we cannot live in this world and perfectly follow God’s plan for our lives or follow His plan in a perfect way. We will “miss the mark” and sin.

When we begin looking at our lives and the things we have done to hurt ourselves and others (our sins) we can respond in several different ways. We may decide to stop looking for God and step back into darkness. We may be so overwhelmed with guilt and shame that we run back to our strongholds. We may decide we need to punish ourselves, so we do something destructive. We may think we can earn the forgiveness we need, so we get busy doing good deeds. All of these responses are natural because there is a natural law within us that knows that payment must be made when we do wrong. We may attempt to make payment by punishing ourselves or others, hiding, doing good things or hardening our hearts through denial. However, we will respond in some way when we look at how we have hurt ourselves and others by the choices we made in our lives.

How do you usually respond when you look at how you have hurt yourself and others?

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How does looking at the mistakes you’ve made in your life make you feel?

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Do you think that looking at the mistakes you’ve made in your life can lead you to seek comfort in ‘little gods?’ If so, how?

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Please read the following verses, giving careful thought to what God is saying to you about forgiveness:

***In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22 NIV).***

***In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding (Ephesians 1:7-8).***

***For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23 NIV).***

***But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7).***

What is God's Word telling you about your sins?

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## Lesson 9: Forgiveness

Recall that the Biblical definition of forgiveness means that 1) we cannot do anything to earn forgiveness and 2) forgiveness is complete. This is where grace and forgiveness collide. Grace is getting favor or a gift that we don't deserve. Grace cannot be earned in any way. There is not one thing that we can do to earn grace. We cannot make ourselves worthy for receiving grace, prepare ourselves to receive grace, nor can we make grace disappear. Grace is larger than us, larger than our lives and certainly larger than our sins. Grace has no end and is beyond all measure. Grace is what gives us entrance into our relationship with God, keeps us in our relationship with God, and places a permanent seal around our relationship with God (a covenant).

Our sins require payment for us to receive God's forgiveness. Without payment, our sins would not be forgiven. Without forgiveness, we are left with the weight of guilt and shame and are bound to chains of darkness. The enemy would have power over us because sin is his domain. So, if our sins require payment and we cannot do anything to earn forgiveness, then how is payment made? The Cross. Jesus. Grace. Jesus took our sins upon Himself, carried our sins to the Cross and died for our sins. His blood made complete payment for our sins and made forgiveness a gift to all who would receive His grace.

When you consider that Jesus made full payment for ALL your sins, how does that make you feel about God's love for you?

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How do you think knowing of God's grace and forgiveness will affect the way you view the sin in your own life?

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## Lesson 9: Forgiveness

When we make choices to follow the enemy's markers and turn to 'little gods,' we are choosing to sin against God. When we say and do things to hurt other people we are choosing to sin against God. When we fail to acknowledge that our actions, including the things we say and the things we think about, offend God, we are keeping God at arm's length. **These are all things that Jesus paid for on the Cross so that we can receive God's forgiveness.**

God knows everything about us, including our sins. God's plan is for us to tell (confess) our sins to Him, so that He can forgive us and help us overcome the sins in our lives. Sin offends God and it also leads us into bondage. Our sins don't only hurt us, they hurt other people. As uncomfortable as it may feel at times, we need to confess our sins to God. *Instead of trying to keep God at arm's length we need to invite Him to wrap His nail-scarred hands around the sin in our lives.* He has the **desire** and **power** to forgive us of our sins, and to free us from the power of our sins. Remember that it is God's grace alone that provides forgiveness of our sins. However, we must face our sins and ask for forgiveness in order to receive this gift of grace.

When you consider confessing your sins to God, what thoughts and feelings does that bring up for you?

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How can knowing of God's grace and forgiveness help you confess your sins to Him?

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Please carefully Romans 5:6-8 (NIV):

**“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

Summarize what God is saying to you through Romans 5:6-8.

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Remember that our sins require a payment for us to receive forgiveness from God. Jesus made complete payment for all our past, present and future sins, when He gave His life for us on the Cross.

Why do you think it is so important for us to acknowledge that forgiveness is a gift from God when we confess our sins to Him?

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We have been looking at the darkness in our lives for the past several weeks. We have looked at some of the markers we follow, the ‘little gods’ we chase, and the strongholds in our lives. Sin plays a significant role in how markers are formed, through ‘little gods’ and strongholds. For us to experience healing and freedom from



the markers, 'little gods' and strongholds, we must face the sin that is the basis of all these things. Knowing that Jesus made the payment for our sins on the Cross will help us face our sins. Knowing that God's gift of forgiveness will cover all of our sins will help us face the sins that we desperately try to hide.

1 John 1:9 (NIV) tells us:

***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”***

God promises that He will be faithful to forgive us and cleanse (purify) us from the stain of sin. His forgiveness will wash over us and we will experience healing when we confess our sins to Him.

You may be thinking that there is no way that God could ever forgive you of some particular sin. We might be willing to accept that God will forgive some of our sins but we all have a few that fall under the “no way could He forgive that” list. The sins on that list are the ones that cause us the most shame, and no matter how hard we try, they still haunt us from time to time. Sin that we try to hide has a way of rearing its ugly head and wrapping us with a cloak of shame when we least expect it.

*Remember the Cross.* Remember that the Cross took every sin, including all of the ones on “that list.” No matter how many times the enemy has told you to hide that sin from God because it was too much or too bad or not forgivable, make a decision today to follow Truth. Choose to believe God's Word (His marker) over the lies of the enemy (Satan's markers).

This next question will take some time for us to complete. We are going to ask God to show us sin in our lives that we need to confess. If you can, write down the sins that God brings to your mind on a piece of notebook paper. After you confess (tell) to God each sin, ask God to forgive you of the sin, and then thank God for His forgiveness. Do this for each sin that God brings to your mind. If you have never confessed sin and asked for God's forgiveness then it may take some time to do this assignment. You may even want to work on this assignment several times during the upcoming week. After you write down your sins, confess them and ask for forgiveness. Then tear the notebook paper into pieces and throw it away.







