



WEEK 1 HOST GUIDE

The Power of Forgiveness

Foundation of Freedom

A 6-week biblical leadership small group experience designed to help people grow in faith, find breakthrough, and step into the leadership God created them for.

Launching May 2026

Week 1 Overview

Theme: The Power of Forgiveness

Core idea: True leadership begins with trust in God instead of holding onto offense, hurt, or the need for control.

Host Flexibility Note

This outline is designed for discussion. Feel free to shorten sections based on group size, engagement, and meeting format. The most important part of the program is helping people share, reflect, and grow together.

Host Welcome

Welcome the group and briefly explain why you are excited about the subject of biblical leadership.

As you walk through the outline, cover the key statements leading up to the video. Let the group know these are ideas to think about and discuss together.

The focus of this series is to build a leadership foundation that transforms the way we think about leading our families, relationships, communities, and areas of influence.

Session Flow

- 1 Welcome and introduce the focus of biblical leadership.
- 2 Share the core idea and key leadership connection.
- 3 Read and reflect on the biblical support passages.
- 4 Play the video from Mark and Tracy, or read the story if technology is an issue.
- 5 Guide open discussion using the questions provided.
- 6 Close with hope, encouragement, and prayer requests.

Core Teaching

Core Idea

True leadership begins with trust in God instead of holding onto offense, hurt, or the need for control.

Forgiveness allows us to move forward with freedom instead of being tied to the past.

Everything we believe and stand on in leadership begins with validating our trust in God as a Father who loves us.

You cannot lead well while carrying offense.

Forgiveness is not weakness. It is freedom.

Biblical Support

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Matthew 6:14

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Leadership Connection

Unforgiveness limits trust, clarity, and influence.

Free people lead better.

Forgiveness is a foundational principle that helps us live and lead with freedom.

Leadership Insight

Unforgiveness limits influence. Leaders who carry offense struggle to build trust and unity.

We often think forgiveness is only about our own mistakes. The reality is that wounds caused by others can affect our lives just as deeply as the wrong choices we make ourselves.

Video Insert

Play the Week 1 video from Mark and Tracy here. If technology is an issue, read the story aloud. If you feel led to share your own story, you have that flexibility.

Video Story: Mark and Tracy

Mark

I have a strange image in my mind about walking around with monkeys on my back. These monkeys represent sins or wrongdoing that have affected my life. Some I did to myself, but the majority are monkeys put there by other people that I have chosen to carry.

We find it easy to ask forgiveness for our offense to others because we know our own heart, but we resist forgiving the offenses others did to us.

It really makes no difference why the monkey is there. As long as I leave it there, I have to carry it. It affects my posture, weighs me down, and robs my joy, peace, and effectiveness.

Tracy

I did not grow up in church, so forgiveness was not something talked about. My dad had issues with alcohol and would display outbursts of anger toward my mother, brother, and me.

When my parents went through a divorce, he became very angry with me because I would not take sides. He said things that hurt, and we went 10 years without speaking.

This affected my self-image, and I became resentful and untrusting. I thought, if my dad could say I was a bad person - and he should love me - who could I trust?

I received my breakthrough through developing a relationship with Christ. My freedom came from knowing my Heavenly Father loved and accepted me just as I am.

When I received my healing, I was able to reconcile my relationship with him before he passed. I would not have been able to reconcile if I had not first forgiven him, and I am grateful I did. I was by his side when he went to be with the Lord.

Mark

Offenses keep us insecure and can prevent us from leading with a pure heart.

I was hurt in a business deal. I spent years frozen because I felt like forgiving that person would mean never being restored. I let it rob me of my joy and confidence. Later, I realized God used that situation to protect and redirect me.

Whether we are going through challenges in our health, finances, or relationships, we become free when we put our trust in God to heal us.

Biblical Example: Joseph

Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. Years later, he was placed in charge of all of Egypt during a famine. When his brothers came to the palace for help, Joseph could have held their mistreatment against them. Instead, he recognized that God had been working through the situation.

Joseph's Perspective

What you meant for evil, God meant for good.

Joseph's example reminds us that setbacks can become setups God uses for a greater purpose.

True leadership is more important than ever because our sense of acceptance has often become dependent on followers, likes, and outside approval. To gain the most from this session, encourage the group to share thoughts and insights honestly.

Host Transition

Tonight is not about digging up the past. It is about recognizing anything that might be holding us back from moving forward. If people begin sharing before you finish this section, let it happen. The most important part of the program is people sharing.

Vision Looks Forward

When we stay focused on past hurts, it becomes difficult to see clearly into the future.

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no vision the people perish.

This applies to families, businesses, teams, and relationships. Vision is forward-thinking, and it trusts that God has a plan.

No matter who you are or what situation you are facing, you will never be all God calls you to be if you are hindered by offenses of the past. You cannot go very far while constantly looking back.

The Greatest Example of Forgiveness

The greatest example of forgiveness is Jesus on the cross.

Luke 23:34

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

Even while suffering, Jesus chose forgiveness. That shows us forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling.

There are no perfect parents, husbands, wives, children, siblings, business associates, or friends.

Host Moment

This is a good place for the hosts to share their testimony and insights.

Discussion Questions

- 1 Have you ever found yourself replaying a conversation or situation long after it happened?
- 2 Why do you think it can be difficult for people to let things go?
- 3 What are some setbacks that seemed to hurt you at the time but God later used to help you?
- 4 Do you think unresolved hurt or offense can hold people back from moving forward? Why?

Quote for Reflection

It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.

- Harry Truman

Closing Encouragement

Host Closing Note

Do not rush as you are closing out. This is a time to give hope and encouragement. Be excited for new beginnings with your group.

God does not just set us free to be free. He restores us so we can go to new levels.

The Good News

God is never finished with us.

Isaiah 43:19

For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.

Can we keep our hearts open for God to do something new?

Ask for prayer requests and close in prayer.

I look forward to Week 2!

Facilitator Quick Reference

Use this page as a simple guide while leading the session.

Big Idea

Forgiveness is not weakness. It is freedom. Free people lead better.

Remember to:

Create a safe, welcoming, and encouraging environment.

Keep the conversation moving, but do not rush meaningful moments.

Focus on growth and freedom, not blame or pressure.

Allow people to share, but do not force anyone to talk.

End with hope, prayer, and expectation for what God can do next.

Suggested Closing Words

Tonight, we talked about forgiveness as a foundation for freedom and leadership. My encouragement is that we keep our hearts open this week and ask God to show us anything we may be carrying that He wants to help us release. The good news is that God is never finished with us. He is still doing something new.