

# Teach us how to **pray**

Notes Guide  
**Week Five**



# Forgive us our sins

## Question Guide

### Way in

When was the last time that you had to say sorry to someone about something you had done and were really embarrassed by? How did it feel? Do we find it easier to say sorry to God, or to people? Why do you think that is?

Your friend says to you, 'The trouble with the church is that it makes people feel guilty all the time. Why can't you just get over it, and let people enjoy life a bit?' What would you say?

### Read **Matthew 18:21-35**

1. If Peter is counting up how many times he would have to forgive his brother, what does this say about their relationship? (verses 21-22) Why is hard to keep on forgiving someone who keeps on hurting you?
2. As with many of the parables, the details of the story lull us into a false sense of security before the final words come like a sting in the tail. Why was the first servant in such trouble? What signs are there of the master's extraordinary generosity? What does this show us about our situation before God and God's generosity towards us? (Read Romans 3:23-24).
3. What degree of debt was the second servant in? Why is the response of the second servant so offensive to us? Instead of just saying 'how awful', try to work out some of the little things that we find hard to forgive people for.

4. What do you think about the way the master responds at the end of the story? How does verse 33 link up with the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:12 and Luke 11:4)?

5. Why are Jesus' words in verse 35 such a shock to us? What have we not fully understood about our own situation before God if we are finding it hard to forgive others? How can a fresh awareness of our own need of God's forgiveness create a willingness within us to forgive others?

6. After church one Sunday, a friend who is clearly upset says to you, 'I know that God's grace is amazing, and yet I just can't forgive someone. No matter how hard I try, what they've done is unforgiveable.' You don't know anything about the situation, so what do you do next?

### Quote for **reflection**

*"We are people who have been forgiven an unimaginable debt. What God has done for each of us as Jesus died on the cross for us is to cancel a colossal debt, a debt that we could never repay. When we meditate on the true significance of this we can begin to break the power of an unforgiving spirit."*

Take some time to pray for each other - pray that you would become more aware of God's forgiveness. Then, in confidence, pray for each other about any situations or people in which you know that you find it hard to forgive.

# How to pray for forgiveness

## Question Guide

### Way in

When was the last time that you had to say sorry to someone about something you had done and were really embarrassed by? How did it feel? Do we find it easier to say sorry to God, or to people? Why do you think that is?

Your friend says to you, 'The trouble with the church is that it makes people feel guilty all the time. Why can't you just get over it, and let people enjoy life a bit?' What would you say?

### Read Psalm 51

*David's life was in a mess. As king he had abused his power and had an affair with a woman named Bathsheba, whilst her husband Uriah was out fighting for him. To try and cover his tracks, he ended up deliberately getting Uriah killed on the frontline. By anybody's standard, his behaviour was pretty shocking. And yet, we don't read of David being repentant until the prophet Nathan confronts him of his sin. It is then that it all begins to come tumbling down for David. Psalm 51 is his prayer that follows, in which we hear him begging for forgiveness. (Read 2 Samuel 11 & 12 for the full drama.)*

Read v1-2. As we think about approaching God for forgiveness, what is so encouraging about these verses? When you consider David's offence, your own life and God's greatness, why are these verses the only possible starting point in asking for forgiveness?

Read v3-6. The bible speaks quite clearly about our rejection of God for the sake of living for ourselves. This sin always has devastating consequences for our relationships with God and other people. However, are we generally more aware that we have done wrong towards other people than towards God? Why is verse 6 such a healthy prayer to pray?

The 'hyssop' branch mentioned in v7 was used in the sacrificial system - it was dipped, either in the blood of a sacrificed animal or in water, and then used to sprinkle the 'impure' object or person (see eg. Leviticus 14:4-7, or Numbers 19:18-22). Read Hebrews 9:14: Why is this truth such good news when we pray for forgiveness? Why are we able to be even more confident in praying for forgiveness than David?

"Our lives are mostly a constant evasion of ourselves." (T.S. Eliot). Why does the truth of the gospel mean that we don't need to ignore what we are really like? If we were able to be more honest about who we are and where lasting transformation is found, what might this look like:

- At home?
- In our workplace?
- In church?
- Out in the community?

Read v10-19. What are David's different requests in these verses? How often do these aspects feature in our prayers for forgiveness?

Is there a difference between 'repentance' and 'remorse'? From this prayer, which do you think David was? Why?

One day at church, a close friend confides in you, 'I feel so ashamed. I've done it again. I don't know if I can ever change, or if God can ever forgive me.' How would you respond?

## Quote for reflection

*'Repentance, in a strange way, is refreshing...When we remove our false selves, repentance creates integrity. We return to the real source of love - our heavenly Father. We become authentic.'* (Paul Miller)

Are there areas of your life in which you need to become more authentic? Take some time to pray for each other that God would help you to do so.