

FORGIVING  
*My Father,*  
FORGIVING  
*Myself*  
STUDY GUIDE

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## CHAPTER 1

1. What was it about Michael and the other prisoners whom Ruth encountered that caused her to seek answers from God about forgiveness?
2. Imagine that you were the missionary from Nepal. Would you have been able to forgive Michael whether or not he had repented? Why or why not?
3. Ruth mentions that she has struggled to forgive others who have wounded her, to forgive herself, and even to question forgiving God. Who do you find it hardest to forgive—others, yourself, or God?
4. Have you ever felt like you've forgiven someone, but found that when something triggers the memory of it your emotions go haywire? Share an example.
5. Do you believe that there is a price to pay for choosing not to forgive? If so, what is that price?
6. What excuses do you use not to ask for forgiveness? Not to grant it?

*CHALLENGE: Can you think of a person(s) you need to forgive? Write their name(s) in a private place. Begin to pray and ask God to make you willing to either ask for forgiveness from or grant forgiveness to those you have identified. Remember this is a process. It takes time. No one is going to check up on you. It is between you and God.*

## CHAPTER 2

1. Do you believe that forgiveness is fair? Why or why not? Is it fair in some circumstances but not in others? Explain.
2. Could you identify with Ruth's story about her brother? How?
3. How do you respond to unfairness when it happens to you? To others?
4. On pages 27–28 there are questions concerning who is to be forgiven. How did you react to those questions?
5. As you read the description of the crucifixion of Jesus, what occurred to you?
6. In what ways did Psalm 73:3–4 and Jeremiah 12:1 speak to you?

*CHALLENGE: Contemplate Ruth's closing statement: "Forgiveness isn't fair. It is holy!" How does that change your perspective on forgiveness?*

## CHAPTER 3

1. Can you tell of a time when you realized the truth of the statement: "Time buries all wounds that are not dealt with, and such wounds are buried alive"?
2. Can you identify a buried wound or two? What does that feel like?
3. What misconceptions of forgiveness have held you back from forgiving?
4. What is your current motivation to forgive?
5. Ruth calls herself an apprentice at forgiveness. What would it take for you to declare yourself an apprentice at forgiveness? What benefits would that have?
6. On pages 46–52 in bold type Ruth lists six statements of "What forgiveness is not." Do you agree? Which of those six is the hardest for you to believe?

*CHALLENGE: Can you think of other verses or stories in the Bible that reveal God's heartbeat of forgiveness? Look them up, read them, and ask God to transform your heart to become forgiving.*

## CHAPTER 4

1. Ruth describes herself as being, at times, in a wrestling match with forgiveness. Have you ever felt that way? Why?
2. On page 58 Ruth introduced the concept, “Forgiveness is a way to make our wounds sacred.” What does that perspective mean to you? How can you make something sacred?
3. Think about someone you find difficult to forgive. What is underlying your inability to forgive?
4. In what current situation in your life can you display the character of God? How would that look?
5. Have you ever considered forgiveness to be miraculous? Can you think of an example in your life where forgiveness would take a miracle?

***CHALLENGE:** At the end of the chapter Ruth encourages us to make three choices: Choose to make your wounds sacred. Choose to display the character of God. Choose to participate in the miraculous. Which of those three seems the most challenging to you? Are you ready to ask God to make you willing and able to make that choice?*

## CHAPTER 5

1. Ruth tells of her “welcome home” moment in her daddy’s loving arms and says that he modeled grace for her. Has anyone in your life ever modeled grace for you? What were the circumstances?
2. Is there someone you have difficulty showing grace to? What might be different if you did show him or her grace? Is there any downside to asking God to change your heart toward that person?
3. Ruth wrote: “Forgiveness is the work God is doing—we need only to offer ourselves to be a channel of His grace.” Who are you “working” to forgive? How would it change your perspective if you accepted that God has already forgiven that person?
4. Why do you think Rahab risked her life for the spies? Why was she so bold in asking them to save her and her family?
5. React to this statement: We cannot out-sin God’s grace. Do you believe that is true? Why or why not?

***CHALLENGE:** Read Matthew 18:21–35. If you are still struggling to forgive, is it possible that you’ve not yet grasped the grace that’s been given to you?*

## CHAPTER 6

1. What do you think about confession to another person? Do you think it is necessary? Have you ever done that? Tell about that experience.
2. Talk about a time you asked someone for forgiveness. What fears did you experience beforehand?
3. What does reconciliation look like to you?
4. Discuss how unforgiveness affects us.
5. On page 108 Ruth wrote, “Jesus knew the safest place to vent.” What did she mean? How does Jesus’s example apply to you when it comes to forgiveness?

***CHALLENGE:** Write down the steps to asking someone for their forgiveness.*

## CHAPTER 7

1. Talk about a time you experienced God's conviction. What did you do about it?
2. In what ways has anger served you? In what ways has it not served you?
3. Read John 15:1–7. Discuss how the Holy Spirit operates.
4. What is the difference between guilt and conviction?
5. Could you feel the loving warmth of Jesus's forgiveness and acceptance of Peter? Talk about a time you felt it for yourself.

*CHALLENGE: Why is it that sometimes we don't want to forgive? How can our relationship with the Holy Spirit change that? What will it take on your part for a transformation to take place in you?*

## CHAPTER 8

1. Who or what do you turn to for your sense of community?
2. How many communities do you have in your life, if any?
3. In what ways does your community spur you on to deeper growth?
4. On pages 137–40 Ruth discussed the conflict between Peter and Paul. Read Paul's words in Ephesians 4:30–32 and discuss how Peter and Paul resolved their differences.
5. Is there anything that holds you back from seeking out a spiritual community? If so, discuss what it would take to make you willing to seek it out.

*CHALLENGE: Read 1 Corinthians 12. Consider all the gifts of the Spirit that are present when the body of Christ meets together. Meditate on how being an active part of the body could be God's way to meet your needs and enable you to forgive.*

## CHAPTER 9

1. Why would anyone want to hang on to their bitterness?
2. Who do you identify with more—Jacob or Esau? How so?
3. How does bitterness play out in your life?
4. On pages 154–57 the author discusses ways you can tell whether or not you have unforgiveness in your heart. Is there a sign of unforgiveness operating in your life right now? Which one?
5. Read I Peter 3:9–11; Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:4–5; and Romans 12:2. Discuss what is involved in “taking every thought captive.”

*CHALLENGE: The last phrase of the chapter says, “. . . remembering what the Lord has done in us and through us builds our faith and reminds us that the battle is the Lord's.” Make a list of what the Lord has done in you and through you. Contemplate how all this demonstrates to you that the battle is the Lord's.*

## CHAPTER 10

1. “We are all works in progress,” writes Ruth. Share an area of your life where you are still “in progress.” Do you find that frustrating or are you at peace with that reality?
2. Think about the gospel reaching into your deepest, darkest areas. What would that mean for you?
3. Could you identify with Samson? In what way?
4. What does accountability mean to you?
5. Are you able to take comfort in realizing that God uses even our weaknesses to glorify Himself? Share an example of how that is true in your life.

*CHALLENGE: Do you know what your “core issue” is? If not, ask God to reveal it to you. If so, ask God to begin healing it.*

## CHAPTER 11

1. What memory keeps you chained?
2. An angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar in the desert and asked her where she had come from and where she was going. If an angel of the Lord showed up in your house, what might he ask you?
3. Where do you go to escape?
4. Who or what do you turn to for a sense of wholeness and belonging?
5. How do you respond to this statement: In the process of healing God grew bigger in my eyes. Has God grown bigger in your eyes in some way? Explain.

*CHALLENGE: Ruth writes, “When God reveals Himself to you in your wilderness, He will ask your obedience.” Have you experienced this in your life? How did you respond—in obedience or disobedience?*

## CHAPTER 12

1. Do you sometimes think God is mad at you? In what ways? In what ways are you mad at God?
2. Are you mad at you? If you are, how can you come to see yourself as God sees you—forgiven?
3. On pages 211–13 Ruth discusses ways to counter negative self-talk. Which of those ways is most helpful for you? Give an example.
4. On pages 218–23 you will find five questions in bold. Discuss how you would answer those questions.
5. What is the difference between regret and remorse?

*CHALLENGE: Can you relate to Ruth’s statement, “My problem was not one of being forgiven but feeling forgiven”? Read 1 John 1:9. Do you believe this verse is true? If so, then confess your sin and work on your negative thinking as described on pages 211–13.*

## CHAPTER 13

1. Can you look at your life and see an old broken place that God has transformed for His use? Share an example.
2. When do you think Joseph forgave his brothers?
3. How did Joseph make his wounds sacred?
4. How did Joseph display God's character?
5. In what ways is forgiveness a form of worship?

*CHALLENGE: Read Philippians 1:4–6. What does this tell you about your struggle with forgiveness?*

## CHAPTER 14

1. Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Do you believe that is true? What does it mean to you?
2. Discuss how Romans 8:1 affects what you now believe about forgiving others and forgiving yourself. How does this verse apply to the issue of asking someone else to forgive you?
3. What was your idea of forgiveness before reading this book? Has that idea changed or is it beginning to change?

*CHALLENGE: In this study guide, under chapter one, this challenge was given: Can you think of a person(s) you need to forgive? Write their name(s) in a private place. Begin to pray and ask God to make you willing to either ask for forgiveness from or grant forgiveness to those you have identified. Remember this is a process. It takes time. No one is going to check up on you. It is between you and God. Think about what progress you have made since chapter 1. Are you willing to share some part of that story with the group?*