

Jesus

Chapter Summary

Weekly Win

The win is for participants to understand that only Jesus offers himself as the solution to our need for forgiveness and as the exclusive means of reconciliation with God.

Bottom Lines

- Experiencing personal forgiveness for personal sin is often the starting point for personal faith.
- In all of history, only Jesus offered himself as the answer to the question of what to do when we can't forgive ourselves.
- You don't have to forgive yourself; *yourself* has already been forgiven.

Before the Meeting

Pray

Continue to pray for your group members individually. Pray that they will see Jesus for who he truly is—their Savior.

Communicate with Co-Leader(s)

As leaders, you should address the following items:

- Evaluate the fourth meeting with your co-leaders soon after it's over. Talk about what you feel went well and what you think needs to be adjusted for the next meeting.
- Decide who will be facilitating which parts of the discussion for the next week.
- Clarify which leader will follow up with any group members who you feel need individual attention.
- Ask yourselves, "Are group members experiencing a *conversational* environment where they can explore faith and experience community?"

CONTACT GROUP MEMBERS

Contact your group members individually by email, phone, or a note. Hopefully, you've connected with group members outside of your group time for a meal or coffee. Also, remind those who are sharing stories this week so they will come prepared.

We've created this [email template](#) to use as you contact your group members each week. We recommend sending an email a few days before your group to serve as a reminder.

PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT

Prepare a welcoming environment for the group members by being available before and after group.

Discussion | Section One

Finding Forgiveness

Section Win

The win is that participants will understand that personal faith (the Christian variety) begins with recognizing the need for forgiveness from our personal sin.

Section Summary

We all have seasons, chapters, or moments that we regret and would like to do over. When dealing with our regrets, we either explain them as human frailty, point to others who have behaved worse, or retreat to other forms of coping. Our strategies, at best, only work temporarily. What we need is something that will release us from our regrets in a more permanent way. We need lasting forgiveness.

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

- What do you wish you could do over?
- Do you resonate with the idea that you need to forgive yourself? Why or why not?
- Do you believe you need forgiveness? Why or why not?

Leading the Discussion

Question 1: This discussion allows participants to share personal examples of how they relate to the idea of regret or wanting to do parts of their lives over. Talking about bad decisions or seasons of life we are not proud of can be difficult. Facilitators should be prepared to go first if needed.

Question 2: For some participants, the biggest barrier to faith is not intellectual. It's the inability to accept God's forgiveness because they cannot forgive themselves. This discussion gives you the opportunity to address this, especially if this was part of your own journey to faith.

Question 3: Before Jesus' sacrificial and substitutionary death has true meaning, before

people can see Jesus as their Savior, they must first realize they need one. For the rest of this chapter and beyond, the conversation will go into greater depth about Jesus, grace, and faith. As a facilitator, you need to know where the group is in recognizing their need for forgiveness as you prepare to shape those future discussions.

Discussion | Section Two

The Messiah

Section Win

The win is for participants to understand that Jesus' core message was that he is "the sacrifice for our sin."

Section Summary

John the Baptist was a forerunner of Jesus. His main role was to prepare the people for Christ's ministry. When John saw Jesus, he called him "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." This title had particular significance to the original Jewish audience that had been putting animals to death for centuries as substitutes for their own acts of disobedience. John was calling Jesus "the final sacrifice for all sin." Jesus himself reinforced this idea at the Last Supper when he foreshadowed his suffering by connecting the bread and wine of the Passover meal to his own broken body and spilled blood. Jesus was confirming John's radical assertion that he was "the sacrifice for our sin."

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

- Why is the title "Lamb of God" significant?
- According to the text, how is Jesus connected to our need for forgiveness?
- Why was Jesus' death necessary?

Leading the Discussion

Question 1: Since the significance of the title "Lamb of God" requires some context from ancient Jewish tradition, it could be difficult for some participants to fully understand why that title meant so much. You may need to add some historical context.

Question 2: This question helps determine if participants have connected why Jesus was a necessary sacrifice for sin. Whether or not participants decide to believe it, we want them to be

clear on who Jesus claimed to be and why his death was necessary.

Question 3: The materials do not explicitly cover the concept that the penalty for sin is death. This question gives you the opportunity to discuss the idea that death (separation both now and forever) was established at the very beginning (Genesis 3) as the penalty for human disobedience. It is also why God established a sacrificial system that, in part, involved putting animals to death as substitutes for human sin. The payment that satisfied the price tag for sin would have to be death. If Jesus was going to offer himself as the payment for our sin, he had to die.

Discussion | Section Three

Only One Person

Section Win

The win is that participants understand that Jesus' sacrificial death was the gift that God offers us as the permanent solution for our sin. There is nothing we need to do other than receive this gift.

Section Summary

Christians believe that Jesus was the final sacrifice whose death carried away the sin of the entire world. The good news is that through Christ's death, we have already been forgiven. God has, in effect, canceled our sin and released us from the burden created by our guilt and regret. Other faith systems give us things to do; God offers something that has already been done for us. This is God's great gift to us. But like any gift, it must be received.

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

- According to this section, what is required of you to receive God's forgiveness?
- How do you feel about the idea that your sin has already be canceled?
- What is standing in the way of you accepting God's forgiveness through Christ?

Leading the Discussion

Question 1: This question helps determine if participants understood that Jesus' sacrificial death was a gift that God offers each individual. If participants are not clear on this, this question is an opportunity for facilitators to provide clarity.

Question 2: Having your sins forgiven is an appealing concept, but it may be hard for some

participants to embrace this because of their performance-based beliefs. It may seem too easy. When properly understood, the primary emotion our forgiveness should solicit is gratitude. Even if participants do not believe or have yet to believe this, you can still ask, "What difference do you think it would make in your life if you *believed* that all of your sins were forgiven?"

Question 3: This can be an opportunity for seekers to clearly articulate their roadblocks to faith. It can also be an opportunity for starters and returners to share their feelings about living with the reality that they are forgiven.

Wrap-Up

Review Bottom Lines

- Experiencing personal forgiveness for personal sin is often the starting point for personal faith.
- In all of history, only Jesus offered himself as the answer to the question of what to do when we can't forgive ourselves.
- You don't have to forgive yourself; yourself has already been forgiven.

Resource Reminder and Preparation for Next Week

Ask your group members to consider their response to "*What does grace mean to you?*" This will help prepare them for next week's discussion.

Remind the group of the additional resources available on the website. Also, they are to answer the Chapter 6 questions in the Guide and listen to the message for Chapter 6: "Grace."

Stories

Let the group know that no one will be sharing stories next week. You can ask for volunteers to share the week you discuss Chapter 7.

Pray

It might be the right time to ask your group members if they have any specific prayer requests to share with the group. As you close in prayer, remember that you are modeling prayer for your group.