

ALIVE

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FREE

WEEK 5

These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family, and/or with a group or Bible class.

Our growth in freedom will never get better as long as we remain bitter. Bitterness is one of the least admitted and most committed of all bondages. And the sad reality is that it is a prison we both live in and guard, because we have access to the key to freedom—forgiveness. We cannot be free as long as we carry the burden of unforgiven wounds.

1 Holding on to wrongs never turns out right. Bondage is not just the result of what we do; it can be the consequence of something done to us. Share examples of how “getting fouled” can cause us to forfeit our freedom.

2 **Hebrews 12:15** compares bitterness to poison. It is a poison that we take ourselves because of someone else. It feels empowering, but it is actually enslaving. Rick mentioned that **bitterness binds** us to three things: **(1) to my offender, (2) to my fallen sense of fairness, and (3) to Satan’s agenda.** How have you seen this play out in your life?

3 When you don’t throw resentment out you let Satan in. **Read Ephesians 4:25-32.** In what way does unresolved anger and resentment give the devil a foothold in our lives?

4 Forgiveness doesn’t always heal the relationship, but it heals you. **Read Matthew 6:12, 14-15; Mark 11:25; Luke 17:1-4.** Jesus doesn’t spend much time talking about the offender, but he has a lot to say about the response of the offended. Why is that? What “forgiveness” teaching of Jesus convicts you the most?

5 Forgiveness frees us to do three things **(1) to trust the justice of God; (2) to receive the grace of God; and (3) to display the character of God.** Rick says “if you don’t give forgiveness you don’t get the gospel”. What did he mean by that? How does the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18 speak to this question? How does the cross?

6 Free people do not respond out of their hurt; they respond out of God’s heart. How does forgiveness reflect the character of God? How are you doing in regards to forgiving others who’ve wronged or hurt you?

7 Forgiveness doesn’t pretend the wrong never happened or that it didn’t hurt. It doesn’t guarantee reconciliation, but it does bring freedom. It doesn’t always heal the relationship, but it heals you. Who has a story of the release that came through forgiving someone else?

ACTION STEP *You cannot change the past, but you don’t have to be chained to it. What past hurts are you presently carrying? Who must you forgive in order to experience the healing your soul desperately longs for? This week talk with a close friend regarding any wounds you are still carrying around with you. Leave them at the cross and pray for the person who wounded you. The Holy Spirit can empower you to be a supernatural forgiver. Ask Him to allow your life to be shaped by Jesus’ scars more than your own.*