

Connect Groups | It's Time to Heal | Week 8 | Chapters 15& 16

What if the unforgiveness you are holding onto is keeping you spiritually and physically stuck?

Pastor Derwin Gray walked us through what it truly means to reach for forgiveness, showing us that the grace we have received from Jesus must be given away to others. Unforgiveness leads to bitterness, anxiety, and physical stress, trapping us in cycles of pain and broken relationships. Drawing from Ephesians 4:32 and the REACH framework, he reminded us that forgiveness is not about pretending hurt never happened or ignoring justice. Instead, it is a daily decision to look to the cross, rely on the Holy Spirit, and release our right for vengeance so we can experience God's healing.

▼ Understanding the Cost of Unforgiveness

The sermon explains that unforgiveness is not just an emotional burden, but something that can lead to rumination, bitterness, and physical and mental stress. Reflect on an area in your life where unresolved resentment or a lack of forgiveness might be affecting your well-being or relationships.

- How does recognizing these physiological and relational costs motivate you to seek God's healing?
- When you think about past hurts or offenses, how has holding onto unforgiveness created a room of bitterness in your heart that God is inviting you to release?
- **Read Ephesians 4:32** and reflect on the way Christ forgave you, how can you extend that same grace to someone who has wounded you without excusing their behavior?

▼ Empathy and Boundaries in Forgiveness

Pastor Derwin points out that forgiveness does not mean ignoring the law, staying in unsafe situations, or pretending bad behavior is fine.

- Discuss what it looks like to practice wise empathy—understanding the pain that may have shaped an offender—while still holding healthy boundaries and pursuing true justice.
- Why is it vital to separate forgiveness from excusing harmful actions?
- Consider the physical and emotional weight of rumination mentioned in the sermon; in what ways is your mind or body currently carrying the burden of past conflict or stress?

▼ The REACH Framework and Releasing Pain

Using the REACH acronym (see below) and Ephesians 4:32, the message outlines practical steps for walking out forgiveness, such as recalling the hurt, empathizing, and altruistically forgiving.

Recall the Hurt

Empathize with the offender

Altruistically Forgive

Commit to Forgiveness

Hold on to Forgiveness

- Share a time when painful emotions resurfaced after you thought you had forgiven someone, and discuss how choosing to release personal vengeance repeatedly is a normal part of having a human nervous system.
- Looking at the REACH framework, which step do you find most challenging to practice in your current season?

▼ Focusing on What Jesus Has Done

When we think more about what was done to us than what Christ has done for us, it can lead to a victim narrative.

- **Read Hebrews 4:15-16** How can continually looking to Jesus—the Lamb of God who takes away our sin and our compassionate High Priest from overwhelm past betrayals?
- What does it mean to let His grace reshape your identity so you bleed grace instead of wounds onto others?
- When painful memories or triggers resurface, how can you intentionally choose to release personal vengeance and trust the Holy Spirit to help you forgive

again day by day?

THIS WEEK:

- Cultivate a lifestyle of ongoing forgiveness by choosing to extend grace day by day and moment by moment, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit rather than letting past triggers dictate your current relationships.
- Join us for Night of Vision on November 9th at the Indian Land Campus.