



SERMON STUDY GUIDE | PART 1: Forgiving a Friend Who Fails You | 4.8.18 | FOLLOW THE STORY ON FB @FACEBOOK.COM/THESTORYHOUSTON

We all know forgiveness is important, but we don't always know how it works or what difference it makes. Sure, it's for your own peace of mind. Yes, it's immature to hold a grudge. Yeah, it's about making peace. But the Bible's many commands to forgive everyone who hurts us - our friends, family, coworkers, and even our enemies - seem to set us up for failure and disappointment. By simply forgiving someone's foolishness or selfishness, aren't we just *enabling* bad behavior? When we *forgive and forget*, aren't we bound to fall for the same lies again and again?

Throughout *Weightless*, we'll be learning more about how, why, and when to forgive, and with today's message we'll tackle one of the most frequently asked questions about forgiveness: *How can I ever forgive myself?*

How does the Christian understanding of forgiveness differ from that of other worldviews?

Why is "forgiving yourself" not really a *thing* in the Christian worldview?

If you feel unable to forgive yourself, it could mean:

- + You have yet to _____ God's forgiveness.
Ephesians 4:32 - *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ forgave you.*
- + It's time to _____ someone you hurt.
James 5:16 - *Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so you may be healed.*
- + You _____ whatever you feel guilty about.
Hebrews 10:26 - *If we deliberately keep on sinning after receiving the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left.*
- + You have _____ that may require a long-term healing process.
Matthew 11:28 - *"Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

If you're struggling to forgive yourself for something in your past, do any of these four points resonate with you? If so, how?

Matthew 9:1-8

Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man,

“Get up, take your mat and go home.” Then the man got up and went home. When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

By asking, “Which is easier - saying ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or saying ‘Get up and walk?’” Jesus appears to suggest it’s easier to forgive sins than it is to heal someone. He heals the man (which is “harder”) to prove he can forgive sins (which is easier). But as with much of his teachings, there’s more going on here beneath the surface. With this question, Jesus presents a paradox:

Although it would appear that _____ is harder than _____,
forgiveness is _____.

What do you know about the Saul of Tarsus (a.k.a. the Apostle Paul)? Make a quick list:

One of the two or three most important figures in the New Testament, Paul wrote thirteen of the twenty-seven NT books and traveled over ten thousand miles on foot to start at least fourteen churches. He must have felt pretty good about himself, right? Well...

Romans 7:14-25

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing...Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. *What a wretched man I am!* Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

What did Paul have to be ashamed of?

Why do you think Paul never spoke of “forgiving myself”?

In the Christian worldview, what does forgiving yourself really look like?

What’s the difference between “letting go” of your past and (a) making excuses to justify what you did, (b) belittling or avoiding the consequences of your actions, or (c) merely forgetting what you did?

What part of your past do you continue to *hold onto* today? Why do you think you’ve held onto it for this long? How would your life change if you really could let it go?