Session 14: Receiving Forgiveness: Letting the Verdict Land

Duration: 60 minutes • Recovery education group. Ensure all participants are seated and ready

Materials: Index cards; workbooks; the Session 14 handout (Receiving Forgiveness)

Learning objectives — by the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the difference between knowing about forgiveness and receiving it
- Identify their personal forgiveness-blocker — self-punishment, disbelief, fear of presuming, or an unsettled debt
- Practice a spoken response of reception (not a request for feelings)

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 2 — Healing. The one idea today is that receiving forgiveness has predictable blockers, and reception is an act that can be practiced. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. Most people in recovery can believe forgiveness is real — for somebody else. Today we look at the blockers that keep us re-trying our own case: self-punishment, disbelief, fear of presuming, and debts that are genuinely still owed. Receiving is an act, and acts can be practiced.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: "Where do you keep putting yourself back on trial for something that has already been addressed — and what keeps the trial in session?" Log every craving score on the roster.

Passing is honored — you may pass any question, prompt, or practice without explanation, step out and rejoin, and choose a partner-only option where one is offered.

Teaching (20 minutes)

Session 14 addresses the gap most participants name in private: they can believe forgiveness is real for other people, and cannot believe it has happened for them — from the people they harmed, or from themselves. The blockers are predictable. Self-punishment feels like paying — as if our misery were installments on a debt. Disbelief says my case is the exception. Fear of presuming says accepting forgiveness too easily would be arrogance or would cheapen the harm. And sometimes the blocker is practical: restitution is genuinely owed, and Week 5 will separate that work from this verdict. Receiving is an act, like receiving a pardon or a gift: we thank the giver, we stop re-litigating the case daily, and we let the settled verdict change how we walk into rooms — including this one. Feelings follow at their own pace; reception does not wait for them. The REACH steps are: R — Remember the hurt honestly; E — Work to understand; A — Give the gift; C — Commit to the choice; H — Hold on.

- **Self-punishment is not humility** Refusing a pardon does not repair anything. It keeps us at the center of a story we need to be free inside of.
- **Received people become safer people** A person no longer defending their worth can finally listen to those they harmed (Week 5) without collapsing or counterattacking.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

A multisite randomized trial of the REACH Forgiveness workbook found increased forgiveness and reduced anxiety and depression symptoms across five countries (Ho et al., 2024). Key sources for this session: Ho et al. (2024); Worthington (2006). Evidence strength: Strong for the brief self-directed workbook at short follow-up; group adaptation untested. Spiritual practice: Forgiveness practice, received and extended — correlates with REACH Forgiveness (decisional forgiveness); evidence: Strong (Ho et al., 2024). Full citations: Appendix H. The session's Scripture material is in its optional handout (Appendix I), as theological foundation, quoted from the King James Version. The trial was a multisite randomized waitlist-controlled trial of a 2–3 hour self-directed workbook with 2-week follow-up; group adaptation is untested.

'Evidence strength' grades the correlated mechanism, not the spiritual practice itself

Pause midway through teaching: ask, "What part of that sounds most like your life right now?" Take two or three answers, connect them to the teaching, and continue. Teach in your own words — the bullets are your map, not a script to read aloud.

Discussion questions (10 minutes)

1. Which blocker is yours — and where did you learn it?
2. Who in your life has modeled actually believing they are forgiven? What looks different about them?
3. If you stopped re-trying your case every night, what would you do with that energy?
4. What scares you about being fully forgiven — honestly?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

A written exercise: 'The case I keep re-trying is _____. The facts I have faced and the repair I have made or am making are _____. Today I practice receiving that by _____ (a concrete act: telling my coach, putting the written statement in my workbook cover, doing the next right thing on my plan).' Volunteers read only the second and third blanks aloud.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

This week, practice the reception act you named, daily. Each time the old case reopens in your mind, say the verdict sentence aloud once and log it. Notice — without judging — how many times a day the trial tries to reconvene. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Do not press anyone toward declaring themselves forgiven on a schedule, and never frame lingering struggle as weak commitment. Some participants carry harms whose victims are living and unrestored; receiving forgiveness and making human amends are separate ledgers, and Week 5 treats the second with the seriousness it deserves.

Closing (2 minutes)

Stop re-litigating. Practice the reception act you named, daily, and log how often the trial tries to reconvene — without judging the count. Next session: self-compassion — the skill, not the surrender.

Fidelity check for this session: objectives named at the start ☐ craving scores logged ☐ skill practice completed in full ☐ homework written down by participants ☐ session note filed today ☐