Session 22: Forgiving Others: Releasing What We Cannot Carry

PHASE 3 — REBUILDING: RELATIONSHIPS AND LIFE (WEEKS 4–6) · WEEK 5 — FORGIVENESS AND AMENDS

Date: _____ My craving today (0–10): _____ One word for my week: _____

Handout for this session: the Session 22 handout (Forgiveness Worksheet) — in the Handouts Packet.

What we're learning

Resentment is heavy luggage. We replay the injury, argue the case in our heads at night, and pay for it with our peace and sleep. Forgiveness, taught carefully, is the decision to release the debt — to stop personally collecting on it — while keeping every boundary that needs to stay. Forgiving does not mean it was okay. It does not mean the door reopens. It means I stop carrying what is crushing me, one person at a time.

- Forgiveness frees the carrier first The person we refuse to forgive rarely feels our resentment; our own body, mind, and recovery pay its rent daily. Release is self-preservation before it is generosity.
- Feelings follow decisions slowly We decide, we state it plainly (often in writing, often repeatedly), and the emotions re-train behind the decision — the same pattern as receiving forgiveness in Week 3.
- Justice is not my side job Trying to personally settle every score keeps us chained to the injury. Naming what belongs to a court, a process, or the other person's own conscience — and standing down from collecting it ourselves — is permission to put the weight down.
- Some debts get released in installments A participant may release the debt of a parent's neglect this month and find a deeper layer next year. Installments are not failure; they are how deep work goes.

Goals for this session

☐ I can define forgiveness as a decision to release a debt — distinct from trust, reconciliation, and excusing

☐ I can describe the cost of carried resentment to recovery (the Session 6 and Weeks 1–2 links)

☐ I can name an experience of harm I am beginning — not finishing — to release, at a pace set with support

Check-in

Who are you still mentally arguing with — rehearsing what you would say if you finally got the chance?

Discussion — write your answers

Write what you would say out loud — and more, if it comes. There is no right-length answer; there is only an honest one. No names of other people aloud, and headlines only — the facts stay in your private letter.

1. Which distinction — not excusing, not trusting, not reconciling — most changes forgiveness for you?

2. What has carrying your biggest resentment actually cost your recovery so far?

3. Is there a forgiveness you have performed for an audience (family, this program, people around you) that your heart has not caught up to? What would honesty about that look like?

4. What support would you need to begin releasing one debt — counselor, coach, time, safety?

My Release Letter (this letter will not be sent)

Name the debt in facts, its cost to you, and your decision in your own words: "I release _____ from my personal collection. I am done carrying this debt. This does not mean it was okay, and it does not reopen a door that should stay closed." This letter stays in your workbook, or is destroyed, as you and your facilitator decide.

Session 22 — Skill Practice

Private writing exercise: participants write a Release Letter they will not send — naming the debt in facts, its cost to them, and the decision in their own words: 'I release _____ from my personal collection. I am done carrying this debt. This does not mean it was okay and it does not reopen a door that should stay closed.' Letters stay in workbooks or are destroyed by the writer at the end — their choice, stated as a choice. The facilitator reads the decision sentence aloud before the 12-minute writing block.

My Release Letter is written on the full page after the discussion questions. It will not be sent.

My takeaway

The one thing from this session I most need to remember — in my own words:

Homework — this week's application

☐ This week, read your release statement once a day for the person you named, in the plainest words you have. If the wound is deep, book the counselor or coach conversation — making the appointment is this week's completed homework.

Space to do the homework and note how it went:

An optional Scripture handout for this session is available from your facilitator on request.