

Week 1: Letting Go

Speaker: Pastor Josh Hodum (Cookeville, TN)

1. Forgiveness is a Cornerstone of the Church

- Jesus is the chief cornerstone, and He represents forgiveness. (*Ephesians 2:19-20*)
- Without forgiveness, we cannot build a strong spiritual foundation.
- Repentance allows us to receive God's forgiveness—but we must also extend it to others.

2. Forgiveness is a Command, Not an Option

- "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (*Colossians 3:13*)
- Forgiveness is not a suggestion, it's a biblical command.
- Unforgiveness holds us back spiritually, preventing us from moving forward in our faith.

3. True Forgiveness is a Choice, Not a Feeling

- Forgiveness isn't about how we feel—it's a decision to release the offense.
- Holding onto unforgiveness keeps us in bondage, while releasing it brings freedom.
- Forgiveness is not a weakness—it's one of the most powerful acts of faith.

4. The Struggle to Forgive Ourselves

- Many struggle more with forgiving themselves than forgiving others.
- "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (*Psalms 103:12*)
- If God has forgiven us, we must learn to accept that forgiveness.

5. Forgiveness is Not Excusing Sin

- Forgiving someone does not mean what they did was right.
- It does not remove consequences, but it releases us from carrying the weight of bitterness.
- "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (*Ephesians 1:7*)

6. The Danger of Bitterness

- Bitterness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to get sick.
- "See to it that no root of bitterness springs up and defiles many." (*Hebrews 12:15*)
- Unforgiveness doesn't just affect us—it spreads to those around us.

7. The Difference Between Forgiveness & Reconciliation

- Forgiveness is required, but reconciliation is not always possible.
- We are called to pray for those who have wronged us, but that does not mean we must remain in unhealthy relationships. (*Romans 12:19-21*)
- Joseph forgave his brothers long before they were reunited. (*Genesis 45:4-5*)

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Things to Think About (Discussion Questions):

- Have you ever struggled with forgiving yourself? What truth from scripture can help you release that burden?
- How do you view forgiveness—do you see it as a choice or as something based on emotions?
- Are there people in your life you need to forgive? What steps can you take to start that process?
- Do you believe that forgiveness means excusing sin? How does understanding the difference help?
- Has bitterness ever taken root in your life? How did it affect you and those around you?
- What does it mean to leave justice in God's hands rather than taking it into our own? (*Romans 12:19*)