



Discussion Guide
Over/It – Part 3
LEADER GUIDE

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We spend so much of our lives trying to prove we're okay—to ourselves, to others, even to God. But the resurrection is God's final word: you are fully forgiven, fully accepted, and free to live differently. This series explores how that truth becomes real, present power in our everyday lives.

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or discipleship@rockbridge.cc

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"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you."

[Lewis B. Smedes]

LEADER RESOURCES || **Leader Note** *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well.*

- **Passage Summary**
 - This section in the letter culminates in the command to imitate God (5:1); however, getting to that point and the ultimate demonstration of walking in the light of that command is forgiveness and kindness. Paul assumes we are all hurt by each other and that bitterness, anger, etc (v. 31) are real and present dangers. But they are also opportunities to fulfill our purpose and embrace the privilege of being like Christ.

ENGAGE & CONNECT || **Leader Note** *The goal for the icebreaker is to prepare your group for the conversation ahead by connecting with one another's hearts and building joy together.*

There's a sock on the floor in your living room. Who left it there? Why is it there?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER || **Leader Note** *Begin your time together thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, taking a posture of humility and dependence!*

Lord, help us to look at forgiveness today and see Jesus. Let us follow You more closely as we learn this truth from Your word and apply it in forgiving others.

MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE || **Leader Note** *Help your group memorize this verse together by having each person read it aloud. The goal is to enjoy hiding God's word in our hearts together, so encourage everyone to meditate on these verses through the sermon series.*

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

[Ephesians 4:31-32]

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || **Leader Note** *Have someone read aloud Ephesians 4:29-5:2 in the ESV. Your role is to FACILITATE, so keep your group moving along, encourage people to share, and look for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two reminders: 1) Every question does not*

have to be answered ... go where the Spirit leads! 2) Answers do not have to be read aloud ... they're for guidance!

1. How do kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness go together? Which one of these is easiest/hardest for you? *Kindness is the opposite of malice—it's an intent to do good for the other person. Tenderheartedness means you're easily moved by the needs and situations of those around you. And forgiveness lets go of the things others have done that stop you from being kind and tenderhearted toward them. There are likely other connections your group may discover through discussion.*
2. In the sermon, Matt mentioned that forgiveness is NOT approving of/denying what they did, pretending we are not hurt by it, nor reconciliation (that takes 2 people). What were you always taught that forgiveness means? *Look out for some of the toxic teachings about forgiveness. These are often taught to hold people under control and keep them from being free of harmful situations and people. A good view of forgiveness is that—even if you need to get distance and safety permanently—you don't let what they did continue to live in your heart and mind. You can put it in the past, even if the person also needs to stay in the past. Harmful views tend to be about the victim forgetting that they were injured and the perpetrator not experiencing consequences for their actions. Forgiveness is not pretending the wound is healed; it is a guard against the wound becoming infected with bitterness. It is not forgetting. It is simply letting go.*
3. What does Jesus' forgiveness look like? *Matthew 18:21-35 is one of several passages you could use to refresh on how Jesus taught forgiveness. See if someone in your group remembers a parable, then look it up to read together. It is striking to see the difference in how Jesus taught forgiveness versus what many of us learned. Remember that repentance is turning home and looking for Christ, like a sheep that's lost its way calling out, "Where are You?" When we find that where we have gone is away from where Christ is, we can turn toward Him and seek Him. That is repentance, and that is how we are renewed.*
4. Is there something you've had to forgive recently? How often do you still have a temptation to let that thing replay in your mind? *Things we've let go have a tendency to want to circle back around to be meditated on some more. That is a temptation. That is a trap. We must reject it. We must preach to ourselves that we are free—that is in the past. This is NOT the same as someone who hurt us in the past hurting us again, and now we have a new thing to forgive. That means the wounding isn't past—it's present. And we have to deal with that separately. NOTE: It may come up that there is a pattern of intentional and/or severe harm being done to someone in your group. Help them get safe. We do not stand around someone being beaten, yelling at them to forgive each new blow. We first make it stop. We first get them to safety.*
5. What small things do you find difficult to forgive? Why? *Answers will vary. Sometimes small things point to big things, and any response that is disproportionate is a good place to look for an idol in our lives. It may not be the offense that is so difficult to let go, but the looming thing behind the offense. This question is an opportunity to dig into that.*
6. When Matt asked you to identify your greatest hurt/offender right now... what came to mind? *Some may not feel comfortable sharing, and this may be a good one for you to lead by going first. Confession isn't just of our sins, it's also of our wounds. But saying aloud to a group (especially a new group) how you are most hurt is exceedingly vulnerable, so ask the Lord for discernment on whether to and how to lead this question.*
7. Is there a wound that bitterness has infected? A memory that isn't just a memory, but a looping tape that churns up your emotions every time you think about it? *Answers will vary.*

See the note on the next question.

8. Do you wish for vengeance (that they get the harm they deserve) or vindication (that I get proved as right all along) about these things? *Answers will vary. Bring these things from the last two questions to the Lord in prayer on the spot. Help your group members by carrying it to Jesus with them.*
9. Where is the line between confessing and bringing something to light vs. gossip or venting? *If you keep bringing up something, whether in your thoughts, to the person, or to others, it is not forgiven. That is NOT the same thing as confession—which is bringing things to the light to be dealt with. Telling the police the details of a crime is not unforgiveness or gossip. Telling leadership about something that needs to be brought to light is not unforgiveness or gossip. Getting advice for how to handle a tricky situation is not gossip. Accountability and consequences are not unforgiveness. Sometimes, silencing has happened in the name of “forgiveness,” and it’s important to distinguish between the two.*
10. What enemy do you need to pray for? *Answers will vary. Prayer turns us from the thing to the Healer who can bring justice, vindication, restoration, safety, and anything else we need. We can hold to Him instead of onto our offenses.*

STEP OF OBEDIENCE || **Leader Note** *This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.*

Complete forgiveness is our command **and calling**.

As you consider your next step, reflect on: 1) What offense or wound do you need to let go of so you can be free? 2) What do you need to unlearn about forgiveness so you can forgive like Jesus? 3) What do you need God’s help to let go?

Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 2 or 3 for this question, so each person has others praying with them for the needs they’re taking before the throne.

PRAYER FOCUS || **Leader Note** *Be intentional about saving at least 5 minutes to pray together. Try the prayer activity below or pray for one another’s personal requests!*

“Lord, make us free people who are quick to forgive, slow to anger, and slow to hold grudges. Be our justice, our healer, and our defender. Amen.”