

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

***The Two Forgiven Debtors:
Showing Gratitude for Forgiveness***
Luke 7:36-50

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the “Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study”. That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session “Background” located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day’s study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:” as a reading during the Gathering Time. Make copies from the copy given at the end of the Sharing Time and enlist 2 or 3 readers who will prepare ahead of time to read in a meaningful way.

The “**Worship Time**” leader will need the copies of the other sheet (scripture and prayer) for his/her part in the worship.

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Time Leader:

Check with youth to see if they wish to present a dramatic interpretation of the scripture studied today.

Insure that enough copies of the scripture, prayer, and hymn found at the end of the session are printed for all of the group to participate as suggested. Give the copies of the hymn to the person leading the “**Gathering Time**”.

Important: Read the Conclusion to the Worship Time carefully, ahead of time. The final prayer can have a big impact on the church but only if you handle the reading properly. Having some of the group voluntarily insert items of thankfulness is an excellent way to conclude the service and begin the week as Christ’s followers.

Music Sources:

Forgiven by Mark Blankenship and Buryl Red. CCLI 71746

Freely, Freely, *The Worship Hymnal*, # 627; CCLI 13209

Oh, How He Loves You and Me, *The Worship Hymnal* #170; CCLI #15850

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***The Two Forgiven Debtors:
Showing Gratitude for Forgiveness*****Focal Text**

Luke 7:36-50

Background Text

Luke 7:36-50

Main Idea

People serve and love God to the extent that they recognize God's forgiveness and receive it.

Questions to Explore

To what extent do you recognize the greatness of God's forgiveness of you, and how do you show it?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to evaluate the extent to which they recognize the greatness of God's forgiveness of them and how they show their gratitude for it.

Gathering together:

Sing **Forgiven** by Mark Blankenship and Buryl Red, CCLI 71746
or **Oh, How He Loves You and Me**, The Worship Hymnal #170; CCLI #15850

First thoughts:

Today's study challenges us to examine our willingness to forgive others and the relationship of a spirit of gratitude to that expression of forgiveness. Everett Worthington, a Christian psychologist, says that learning to forgive is a lifelong challenge. Ask the group to think about a situation which required forgiveness. Once forgiveness was given, was it a once for all situation or did the forgiver have to ask God's help in a continuing attitude of forgiveness.

Think also of a situation in which you received forgiveness. How did you feel towards to one who forgave you?

Closing the Gathering Time:

Close the Gathering Time by reading the words written by Frances Havergal who lived between 1836-1879. The hymn is titled “**Like a River Glorious**”

As suggested, if appropriate, have two or three persons prepared to read it, taking turns with the verses.

Like a river glorious
Is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious
In it bright increase;
Perfect, yet it floweth
Fuller every day;
Perfect, yet it growth
Deeper all the way.

Hidden in the hollow
Of his blessed hand,
Never foe can follow,
Never traitor stand;
Not a surge of worry,
Not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry
Touch the spirit there.

Every joy or trial
Falleth from above,
Trac'd upon our dial
By the Sun of Love;
We may trust Him fully
All for us to do;
They who trust Him wholly
Find Him wholly true.

Stayed upon Jehovah
Hearts are fully blessed;
Finding, as He promised,
Perfect peace and rest.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

The Two Forgiven Debtors: Showing Gratitude for Forgiveness

Focal Text

Luke 7:36-50

Background Text

Luke 7:36-50

Main Idea

People serve and love God to the extent that they recognize God’s forgiveness and receive it.

Questions to Explore

To what extent do you recognize the greatness of God’s forgiveness of you, and how do you show it?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to evaluate the extent to which they recognize the greatness of God’s forgiveness of them and how they show their gratitude for it.

Introduction to your personal study:

God’s forgiveness is hard for us to grasp. We find it hard to think that the Almighty God would love us so much that He could and would forgive us our sin. As we look at this lesson on forgiveness we will see what we need to do to accept that forgiveness and show our gratitude.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

We need to look at the context of this parable in the Gospel of Luke. The location is Galilee and Jesus’ ministry there. Jesus had returned to Galilee and taught in the Synagogue. News of him had spread and everyone praised Him (Luke 4:15). He then goes back to Nazareth, his hometown, and as his custom was, went to the Synagogue. There He stood and read the Scriptures but when Jesus expounded the passage from Isaiah (Luke 4:17-30) the people were furious and drove him out of the town. Jesus left and went down to Capernaum and began to teach in the Synagogue and here we find the people were amazed at His teaching because His message had authority (Luke 4:32). In the following chapters Jesus drives out evil spirits, heals the sick, calls those who would be His disciples and raises the dead (Luke 7:16-17). The Bible tells us that the people were filled with awe and praised God. They saw Jesus as a great prophet sent from God. News traveled fast, even without modern communication, and reached the ears of John the Baptist. He sent his disciples to the Lord to ask if He “was the one who was to come” (Luke 7:19). Jesus sent them back, telling them to report to John what they had seen and heard (Luke 7:22-23).

Focusing on the Meaning:

Luke 7:33-34.

This is a lesson of comparisons. Jesus talks to the people and compares Himself to John. John was in the wilderness, neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and they said that he had a demon. Jesus comes and goes among the common people eating and drinking with them and the Jewish leaders called Him a glutton and a drunkard and a friend of tax collectors and sinners. He tells the people that John was greater than the prophets (Luke 7:27) and that He would be seen to be greater than John.

Luke 7:36-50.

Simon: In this focal passage we have three main characters, Simon the Pharisee, the woman who was a sinner and Jesus. Picture the setting. The Bible tells us that one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to dinner. It was considered meritorious to invite a guest preacher to dinner. The Pharisees were one of the leading Jewish sects. From our perspective today we consider them to be self-righteous hypocrites, but in Jesus’ day they were the honoured leaders of the Jewish people. They believed that each person was created in the image of God. Even one who had committed a terrible sin could be forgiven and restored to the fellowship of the community of faith. Although some commentators feel that Simon, the Pharisee in this story, invited Jesus to his home in order to trap him, others feel that he wanted to honour Jesus and find out more about him. This personal interest is apparent in verse 39, where he entertains the thought that Jesus may be a prophet or according to some manuscripts, “the prophet” (See Young,

B. *The Parables and Christian Tradition*, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publications, 1988, p. 160).

However, Simon seems to consider the invitation alone to be sufficient honour and fails to extend the common courtesy usually given to a guest. He does not give him water to wash the dust from His feet nor oil to anoint His head.

The woman: We have another character in the scene - a woman who had lived a sinful life (Luke 7:37). When she heard that Jesus was at the Pharisee's house she goes there. Apparently it was quite common for there to be an audience of uninvited guests at such a meal. She brings expensive perfume and stands behind Jesus at his feet weeping (Luke 7:38). She does what Simon neglected to do. She washes the feet of Jesus with her tears, lets down her hair to wipe them and then anoints His feet with the perfume. Since the dinner guests would have been reclining, leaning on their left arms and eating with their right hands, Jesus' feet would have been accessible to her as she stood behind him.

Perhaps the woman had heard Jesus speak in the synagogue that day. Whenever her encounter had been, it had left this woman profoundly changed. She came apparently intending to anoint his feet with perfume, but was so overcome with emotion that her tears fell upon his feet. Lacking a towel, she took off her head piece and wiped his feet with her hair. Then she anointed his feet with the expensive perfume.

This act would certainly not have gone unnoticed. Although onlookers were not unusual in a situation such as this, this was an extravagant demonstration of love. For a woman to uncover her head and let her hair fall down would be considered an immoral act. To use her hair to wipe Jesus' feet would be unheard of even though the custom of foot washing was a common and expected courtesy extended to guests.

Simon watches this and said to himself (Luke 7:39) "if this man were a prophet" he would have known that the woman was a sinner. The Pharisee would have not associated with a sinner or unclean person in such a way. Whatever Simon might have thought about the possibility of Jesus being a prophet, his belief would be sorely tested with this incident. For Simon to have overlooked this incident would have been almost impossible.

Jesus: Jesus now speaks as recorded in Luke 7:40 and proceeds to comment on Simon's question. It is good to note that Simon spoke 'to himself' and no one knew what he was thinking. Jesus addresses Simon's unspoken question and gets Simon's attention by saying, "I have something to tell you." Everyone loves a story and Jesus was the master storyteller. He told Simon a story of the two forgiven debtors. Jesus gets right to the heart of the problem in Luke 7:41-42. A parable is a story with one or more meanings. This one is about forgiveness. There were two men who owed money to a moneylender. One owed 500 denarii and one owed 50 denarii. Neither man had the means to pay, so the lender cancelled the debt.

Jesus asks Simon who would love the lender more (Luke 7:43). Simon answers in what would appear to be a very grudging manner, ***“I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled.”*** Jesus then turns toward the woman (Luke 7:44-48). He points out what Simon failed to do and what the woman did.

Simon was self sufficient, legally righteous with no sense of need or sin. He did not recognize Jesus for who He was, nor did he see his need of Him. The woman, on the other hand, did not feel even worthy to stand before Jesus. She came up behind him. In contrast to Simon’s questioning, doubtful attitude, she came weeping. She recognized Jesus as the one who could meet her need. Jesus goes on to tell her that her sins were forgiven. The other guests question the fact that He forgives sins (Luke 7:49). Jesus doesn’t go into that – doesn’t defend His statement but goes on to tell the woman that it was her faith that saved her (Luke 7:47).

Does this mean that the more we have sinned or the more there is to forgive, the more we will love? Romans 3:23 says ***“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*** It is not the degree of sin that is in question here but the recognition of sin. Simon’s need was just as great as the woman’s. The man who owed 500 denarii and the one who owed 50 were in the same position. Neither could pay the debt yet both were forgiven. Simon and the woman were in Christ’s company. The one was legally righteous and the other was a well known sinner. Both needed Jesus. The woman knew her need and came in faith. Simon did not see his need.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Session:

This passage not only gives a parable but a miracle. The miracle is a soul set free – a sinner saved by grace. Salvation is the greatest miracle. Faith is a condition of forgiveness – love is a consequence.

For Personal Reflection:

1. **What have I learned from this study?**
2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**
3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

The Two Forgiven Debtors: Showing Gratitude for Forgiveness

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth/Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner** at the beginning of this **Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader who downloads the studies for those suggestions).

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Luke 7:36-50

Background Text

Luke 7:36-50

Main Idea

People serve and love God to the extent that they recognize God's forgiveness and receive it.

Questions to Explore

To what extent do you recognize the greatness of God's forgiveness of you, and how do you show it?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to evaluate the extent to which they recognize the greatness of God's forgiveness of them and how they show their gratitude for it.

Connect with Life:

Leader: Give the background to the study which is found in Luke 4:14-9:50. Pick out one or two of the miracles that Jesus performed. Have the group look at John's disciples and point out that Jesus sent them back to John, to tell him what **they** had

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11

The Two Forgiven Debtors: Showing Gratitude For Forgiveness – 10-29-01en

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seen and heard. Discuss what this means today: e.g. how we witness to others by sharing our own experiences of God's grace and forgiveness.

Guide the Study:

Ask the group to read the passage Luke 7:36-50. Make sure that only those who are comfortable reading are asked to do this. Divide the reading into sections around the three main characters Simon, Jesus, and the woman.

Ask the group to picture the scene. Simon invites Jesus to dinner.

Ask: Why do you think he did this? What would be his reason?

Then ask: Was he really interested in who Jesus was or was he out to discredit Jesus? What did the woman do? What did Simon fail to do?

Give time for discussion.

Ask: What do we know about Simon from the scripture? What type of person was he? Point out the position he held as a Pharisee.

Get responses to these questions: What do we know about the woman? Who was she? What type of person was she? (She was a prostitute.) Ask the group to compare the two people.

Have the group look at the scripture again and then discuss these questions:

From this scripture what do we know about Jesus?

How was he compared to John?

Be sure to bring out the fact that John the Baptizer was greater than a prophet (Luke 7:26) and that Jesus was even greater than John.

Discuss the parable that Jesus told.

Ask the group how they would explain Jesus' question to Simon.

Question the group: Who would love the most? Be sure to guide the discussion to the fact that we are all sinners. (Romans 3:23).

Remind the group of this important belief: It is not how much we have sinned, but the fact that ALL have sinned. We are all equal at the foot of the cross.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Share the following comments:

There may be people in our group that struggle with this whole concept of forgiveness. Maybe someone feels that God could never forgive them because they have sinned too much.

Others may not see themselves as being sinners because they have never done anything really bad – they always do what they can to help people – they have always gone to church – they go by the golden rule.

Maybe a person in our group is having a hard time forgiving someone.

Lead the group to consider what Jesus did on the cross.

Then say: Jesus died for our sin that we might have eternal life. We need to accept God's forgiveness and receive Jesus Christ into our heart as our Lord and Saviour. When we accept God's forgiveness by faith we will be able to forgive also.

Request someone to lead in prayer.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

The Two Forgiven Debtors: Showing Gratitude for Forgiveness Luke 7:36-50

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Playing It Out

This would be a great story to dramatize. Three characters are needed – Jesus, Simon and the woman. If your group does not meet those demands, consider rewriting the story as a modern scene using those youth in your group. If you are comfortable doing so, share your interpretation with the larger group during Sharing Time.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

***The Two Forgiven Debtors:
Showing Gratitude for Forgiveness***
Luke 7:36-50

Forgiven by Mark Blankenship and Buryl Red. CCLI 71746
Freely, Freely, *The Worship Hymnal*, # 627 CCLI 13209

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

Our consideration today of the necessity for forgiveness and reconciliation applies not only to individuals but to countries and governments and ethnic and religious groups. May we pray today that our hearts would be cleansed of jealousy, rancor, prejudice, and pride as we think of world needs. Pray for peace in the world and pray for your part in bringing that peace to pass.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Forgiveness and Gratitude – Are they related?**Introduction:**

Forgiveness is a topic of interest in both the secular and Christian world today. A website called www.theconfessor.uk indicates that there are 16,000 visitors a day who unload their guilt and pain anonymously.

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15

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An increased interest in the concept of forgiveness exists because there is an openness to spiritual issues in today's postmodern world and because we have a greater understanding of the relationship between physical health and forgiveness.

Less attention is paid to the importance of a spirit of gratitude as a part of the healing nature of giving and receiving forgiveness.

We have examined in the Bible study the story of two people who related to Jesus. The Pharisee felt that Jesus was fortunate to have been invited to his residence and asked to dine. He felt no need for forgiveness from Jesus and he felt no gratitude for Jesus' gift of His presence.

The woman in the story is as different as she can be from the Pharisee. She understands her need for forgiveness from Jesus and she is deeply grateful to be in His presence – so grateful that she anoints his feet with perfumed oil and dries them with her hair.

As the Pharisee expresses his distaste for her action, Jesus challenges him with a parable of two debtors whose debt had been forgiven. One had a large sum owed and forgiven. The other had a smaller sum owed and forgiven. Jesus asked the Pharisee who would feel the most gratitude and the Pharisee replies grudgingly that the one who had the most debt pardoned.

Even in this dialogue, however, there is no sense that the Pharisee sees himself in need of pardon. Nor is there any gratitude for Jesus' presence or his teaching. If the words of Jesus touched the Pharisee, it happened at a later time and we are not privileged to know about it.

But we do see the beautiful picture of the woman receiving the blessing of forgiveness and acceptance from Jesus and expressing her gratitude.

Philippians 4: 6-7 tells us ***“Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”***

One of the great antidotes to pain of any kind is the ability to recognize the many blessings that do exist in our lives. When we pray and petition God recognizing the abundant blessings we have already been given, He is ready to give us peace. That peace will guard our hearts and minds from the trauma both of our unforgiving spirit and the open wound of having been hurt by another.

When the two top officials of the Khmer Rouge regime which was responsible for the death of over 1 million people in Cambodia surrendered to the current prime minister, the conditions of their surrender were that “bygones be bygones”. The killing of huge

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16

The Two Forgiven Debtors: Showing Gratitude For Forgiveness – 10-29-01en

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numbers of their fellow countrymen was considered to be the consequence of a difficult and complex point in history. Recently, a young Christian woman whose immediate and extended family were killed by the Khmer Rouge during those difficult days had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Khieu Samphan, the intellectual designer of the killing days in Cambodia. She told him about Christ and gave her forgiveness to him.

Part of what allowed her to do that was her own salvation experience and the reality that God is doing a tremendous work of salvation in the lives of Cambodian people. A thankful heart for today's blessings has allowed her to focus on the challenges and opportunities for ministry which exist today. Gratitude has transformed her pain into forgiveness.

Everett Worthington writes about forgiveness from a personal perspective. His mother was murdered during a botched robbery in her home. The killer has never been apprehended. His book *Forgiving and Reconciling: Bridges to Wholeness and Hope* gives twelve steps for becoming a more forgiving person. He speaks of the ongoing nature of forgiveness and says becoming a forgiving person is a challenge that can occupy one for a lifetime. Our study today might lead us to encourage Worthington and others to consider the importance of gratitude as a component to giving and receiving forgiveness.

Jan Karon's wonderful stories about the imaginary town of Mitford and the loving and overworked Episcopal priest, Father Tim, record the story of Miss Sadie. Miss Sadie is a long time member of The Lord's Chapel and a dear friend of Father Tim. As she grows older, Miss Sadie shares the love story of her youth. While studying in France, she met a charming young man whose home happened to be Mitford. Unfortunately, the young man had offended Miss Sadie's father. Her father forbade her to continue her relationship with this young man even though he was bright and successful and continued to ask forgiveness. As Miss Sadie shares her story with Father Tim, the reader is filled with a deep sadness that such an unfortunate attitude led to lifelong consequences for the father, for Miss Sadie, and for the young man who loved her.

Say: Let us say together the verse from Philippians 4:6-7 which is on the sheets of paper you were given.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Concluding the Service:

Leader: Ask the group to bow their heads as you lead them in this prayer and as they read the prayer silently while you read it aloud. You choose to insert in the prayer one

or more things that your church is thankful for today or ask them to insert those items when you come to that line:

“Lord, today we pray that we will learn to not be anxious about anything. Today by prayer and petition, we bring to you our need to be able to forgive. We lift up to you the names of those who we need to forgive.

With thanksgiving, we present our requests to you. We are thankful today for
_____.

And, Lord, we ask that your peace which transcends (is bigger than) all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Lord, this means, that when I want to pick up my unforgiveness once again, that I ask you to give me your peace and guard me from those thoughts.

May it be so, Lord Jesus. Amen”

Prepare enough copies of these two final pages for participation by the whole church group.

Like a River Glorious

Like a river glorious
Is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious
In it bright increase;
Perfect, yet it floweth
Fuller every day;
Perfect, yet it growth
Deeper all the way.

Hidden in the hollow
Of his blessed hand,
Never foe can follow,
Never traitor stand;
Not a surge of worry,
Not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry
Touch the spirit there.

Every joy or trial
Falleth from above,
Trac'd upon our dial
By the Sun of Love;
We may trust Him fully
All for us to do;
They who trust Him wholly
Find Him wholly true.

Stayed upon Jehovah,
Hearts are fully blessed;
Finding, as He promised,
Perfect peace and rest.

(Frances Havergal 1836-1879. Public Domain)

Let us say together the verses from Philippians 4:6-7.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

“Lord, today we pray that we will learn to not be anxious about anything. Today by prayer and petition, we bring to you our need to be able to forgive. We lift up to you the names of those who we need to forgive.

With thanksgiving, we present our requests to you. We are thankful today for _____.

And, Lord, we ask that your peace which is bigger than all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Lord, this means, that when I want to pick up my unforgiveness once again, that I ask you to give me your peace and guard me from those thoughts.

May it be so, Lord Jesus. Amen”