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## SESSION FIVE:

# RELATIONSHIPS REQUIRED

Relationships can get complicated. At some point, we've all been hurt by someone we trusted. Whether it was a friend, a loved one, or someone we looked up to, those wounds cut deep. And when trust is broken or we've been betrayed, it's easy to start doubting other people altogether.

We put up walls to protect ourselves from being hurt again. But here's the problem with walls: they don't just keep the bad stuff out—they also keep out the good stuff. Pushing others away might feel like the safe choice, but it's not the life God has for us. You and I weren't created to live disconnected. We were made for community. Relationships are required.

In this session, we will explore what it means to build trust, extend forgiveness, and cultivate healthy relationships, even when doubt tries to take over.



*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."*

**Matthew 5:9**





## GROUP DISCUSSION

Leader, read these questions aloud.

1. Can you think of a time when you were betrayed in a relationship or friendship (Examples: in your childhood, your teenage years, or recently)? How did that betrayal impact your ability to trust others? *(Note: you don't need to share details or names)*
2. Colossians 3:13 says, “Bear with each other and forgive one another...forgive as the Lord forgave you.” How does this verse challenge you regarding forgiveness?
3. Is there someone in your life you need to apologize to or extend forgiveness to? What steps do you need to take?
4. How has God used conflict or other relational difficulties to grow your character?



## CLOSING PRAYER

Select a volunteer to pray this closing prayer over the group:

“God, thank You for being a God of grace and forgiveness. Help us to reflect your character by extending that same grace to others. Teach us to trust again, to believe the best about people, and to walk in forgiveness and freedom. Heal our hearts where they’ve been hurt, and help us to be peacemakers. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

# WORK OUT THE DOUBT

## PERSONAL STUDY

### → READ

Joseph's life was filled with messy relationships, but his story was marked by radical grace and forgiveness. As Joseph's story unfolds, we don't see him get bitter—we only see him get better!

**Read Genesis 37–46. Note how Joseph responded to his brothers' betrayal.**

### → RELATE

How can you relate to Joseph's experience with betrayal?

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How do you typically respond when a friend or loved one hurts you?

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## → REFLECT

When Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, they separated him from everyone he loved. He was later unjustly accused and thrown into prison. Read Genesis 39:2 and Genesis 39:21. What do these passages reveal about God's presence and character?

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According to these two passages, what can we believe God for when we feel alone, wrongly accused, or misunderstood?

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Read Genesis 41:52. What does Ephraim mean?

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Joseph didn't focus on the pain and frustrations he faced at the hands of others. Instead, he trusted that God would bring fruit (something good) out of the situation. What relationship is causing you frustration right now, and how might God be using it to develop fruit in your life?

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Joseph didn't fake peace with his brothers—he made peace. What does Matthew 5:9 say about peacemakers?

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What do you think the difference is between being a “peace-faker” and a peacemaker?

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Which relationship in your life do you feel the Holy Spirit calling you to be a peacemaker in? What's kept you from making peace and how does Joseph's story challenge you to take a step toward forgiveness and reconciliation?

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## → RESPOND

If you've got a broken relationship, consider writing a note of forgiveness or an apology. You may or may not decide to give the note to the other individual, but writing it out will help you reflect on the power of grace that you need or that you need to extend to someone else.

## IF YOU'RE APOLOGIZING:

- 1** | **Admit you were wrong.** Be specific. Own up to it. No “ifs” or “buts” allowed. Own 100 percent of your part.
- 2** | **Accept the consequences.** Even if the other person forgives you, there may be consequences to your actions. Don't try to avoid taking responsibility. Accept the consequences.
- 3** | **Alter your behavior.** Don't say you're sorry, and then continue doing what you did. Let your actions prove that you're truly sorry.
- 4** | **Allow time.** Sometimes, the offense goes so deep that it takes time to heal. Allow the time. Don't expect everything to go back to the way it was after one apology. Allow time to build back trust.

## IF YOU'RE EXTENDING FORGIVENESS:

- 1** | **Forgiveness is not a feeling; it's a choice.** If you wait until you feel like it—you won't. Forgiveness is an act of the will. You get to choose to love the other person, to forgive the way Jesus forgave you, and to release yourself from carrying the weight.
- 2** | **Forgiveness is not forgetting.** The scar of what the other person said or did may never leave your memory. Forgiveness is a one-time acknowledgment; healing is a process.
- 3** | **Forgiveness is not the same as trust.** Forgiveness can be given instantly, while trust takes time. Just because you forgive someone for what they did doesn't mean you can immediately trust them. Transparency, consistency, and time will build back trust in the relationship.

Read the following verses out loud and circle every word that challenges or inspires you.

*“Above all things have intense and unfailing love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins [forgives and disregards the offenses of others].” 1 Peter 4:8 (AMP)*

*“Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.” 1 Corinthians 13:6-8*

*“Be kind and compassionate to one another and forgive each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*  
**Ephesians 4:32**

*“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”* **Colossians 3:13**

*“As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”* **Romans 12:18**

*“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose.”* **Romans 8:28**

