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**2026 ANNUAL THEME: “HOPE IN MOVEMENT”**  
**February Theme: Quitting is Not an Option**

**BIBLE STUDY**

**February 4, 2026**

**“The Hope Hall of Fame (Part 1): Forgiving Each Other” (Ephesians 4:32)**

**Topics**

- Scripture Reference
- Reflection Questions
- Important Emphasis
- Key Terms and Definitions
- Outline
- Introduction
- Background and Context
- Explore The Text
- Check For Understanding
- Life Application

**Scripture Reference:**

*“Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32 NASB).*

**Reflection Questions**

- A. Is saying that you will forgive but will never forget a righteous response for a Christian after being hurt or offended by someone? Briefly explain your answer.

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- B. What challenges do you face when trying to forgive someone who has wronged you?

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- C. Kindness, compassion, and empathy are foundational principles of forgiveness. Are these principles viewed as signs of strength or weakness in today’s pluralistic and politically polarized world? Briefly explain your response.
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### IMPORTANT EMPHASIS

Thomas Jefferson did a little cutting and pasting of his own when it came to the scriptures. He literally took a razor and cut out the parts of the Bible involving anything seemingly supernatural.  
~ Bob Goff

Do we engage in the same behavior as Thomas Jefferson concerning the parts of scripture that we struggle with?

Forgiveness is not an easy topic to preach, teach or instruct on because our flesh desires to refrain or resist the medicine of grace, mercy and forgiveness. The author Lysa Terkeurst wrote a book concerning this entitled “Forgiving what you can’t Forget” *Discovering how to move on, make peace with painful memories, and create a life that’s beautiful again.*

#### What is Forgiveness

Forgiveness is not merely the end of human anger against an offender; it also effects the renewal of fellowship. “The Encyclopedia of Christianity.”

Rudolph Bultmann calls forgiveness “release from guilt and punishment”

Forgiveness indicates a pardon for a fault or an offense. To excuse from payment for a debt owed.

The Hebrew (OT) word is *nasa* to take away sin. A second term used in the Hebrew (OT) is *salach* to pardon. In the Hebraic Text or Old Testament God is always the subject of the pardon. LXX expands the forgiveness vocabulary to 20 terms. **Psalms 103:12, Isaiah 38:17 and Micah 7:19**

God is characterized early in the life of Israel as a God who both forgives and holds the guilty accountable. (**Exodus 34:7**) He provides forgiveness through the sacrificial system. **Lev. 4:20**

**Forgiveness is the vehicle in which God reappropriates the blessings of his gracious covenant.**

The New Testament term is *aphiemi* (forgive) together with *aphesis* the most used term for forgiveness... one of the meanings is *letting people go or dismissing them*. Another word is *charizomai* pardoning.

John’s baptism was for repentance and the forgiveness of sins. **Mark 1:4 and Luke 1:76-77**. It is the blood of Jesus atonement that yields eternal forgiveness of sins.

**Jesus places enormous emphasis on horizontal (human to human) forgiveness. God's forgiveness cannot be effectively received except by those who are ready to forgive others. Matthew 6:15 and Luke 6:37**

Jesus' model prayer, the forgiveness the individual receives is dependent upon the forgiveness the individual gives to those who offend him. This is the fifth petition of the Lord's prayer. Paul defines forgiveness as the fundamental condition for Christian fellowship. **Col. 3:13**

**An unforgiving spirit is the evidence of stubborn pride**, which is not the attitude with which to approach God for mercy. Contemporary Judaism suggest "Love one another from the heart, therefore, and if anyone sins against you, speak to him in peace... if anyone confesses and repents, forgive him."

### **How do We Forgive**

Forgiveness is central and not merely peripheral to ministry! Sin and forgiveness affected the community profoundly: In experiencing forgiveness, the community was moved to seek it. Confucius says *humility is the foundation of all the virtues*. Love is at the foundation of Christian behavior. **Agape** love!

### *Community at Ephesus*

Paul writes to this mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles. The first thing that he urges them to do is walk in a manner worthy of the calling. Paul is expressing a standard of spirituality. Ephesians 4:1 Paul also leads with the number one. There is the rhetorical device of repetition used to highlight a major point Paul is communicating here. Let's review a few of these: One body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, one Father. This is urging the unification of the community to remain as one!

Paul does not insinuate that there will be no disagreements. Paul informs them how to handle them in Ephesians 4:15 But speak the truth in love! "Speaking the truth is not difficult for many Christians doing so in love can prove challenging." But he also lets them know what to avoid; ignorance, a hardening of the heart and being callous in your behavior.

How can we forgive? Paul reveals to us how to execute this in **Ephesians 4:23** and in **Ephesians 4:27**. Verse 31 includes a list of social vices to be avoided, while vs. 32 details virtues to be acquired and nurtured for the good of the community; the virtues enhance its growth.

The actions of God through Christ serve as the model for Christian community, Christians themselves must sustain it by following God's example. Instead of fighting for the pie Christians should find ways to share it. This passage argues for unity. **Power politics has no place in the Christian community.**

## Key Words and Terms

Accountable  
Command  
Commitment  
Compassion  
Communal  
Connection  
Culturally diverse  
Divine Command  
Divine Forgiveness  
Divine Grace  
Empathy  
Faith  
Forgave  
Forget  
Forgive

Forgiveness  
Forgiving  
Forget  
Gospel  
Humility  
Identity  
Judaism  
Kindness  
Omniscience  
Paganism  
Power  
Reconciliation  
Spiritual growth  
Transformative  
Unity

## OUTLINE

- I. Compassionate Connection (4:32a)
- II. Christlike Conduct (4:32b)
- III. Continuous Commitment (4:32c)

## INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness is a central theme in Christianity, deeply rooted in biblical teachings. Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:12-13 emphasize the importance of kindness, compassion, and humility as foundational elements of forgiveness, reflecting the divine forgiveness received through Christ. Jesus' teachings, particularly in Matthew 6:14-15, which highlights the transformative power of forgiveness. It links our willingness to forgive others with receiving forgiveness from God. Luke 17:3-4 further challenges believers to maintain a continuous commitment to forgiveness, illustrating it as a lifelong practice rather than a one-time act. Collectively, these scriptures underscore forgiveness as a divine command and a vital component of spiritual growth and deeper connections with God and others.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Paul's letter to the Ephesians was written during a time when the early Christian church in Ephesus, a culturally diverse city in the Roman Empire, faced challenges in forming a unified community amidst various beliefs, including paganism and Judaism. Recognizing the potential for conflict, Paul emphasized the importance of forgiveness to maintain unity and harmony within the church. In Ephesians 4:32, he highlighted forgiveness as a reflection of God's own forgiveness through Christ, central to the new Christian identity. This act of forgiving was not only about resolving disputes but also about embodying the transformative power of the Gospel and demonstrating faith to the world. Paul's message underscored that forgiveness was a communal necessity, crucial for the church's health, growth, and witness.

## I. Compassionate Connection (Ephesians 4:32a)

*“Be kind to one another, compassionate...”*

In today's pluralistic, and politically polarized world, the principles in Ephesians 4:32—kindness, compassion, and forgiveness—are often seen as **countercultural** yet they are extremely necessary if we hope to achieve true peace.

**Kindness and Compassion as Bridges:** In a world marked by division and polarization, kindness and compassion can serve as bridges between differing viewpoints and cultures. These principles encourage empathy and understanding, fostering dialogue and cooperation across diverse groups.

### **The meaning, value, and necessity of Compassion:**

In the Bible, compassion means deep sympathy for someone's suffering, combined with a strong desire and action to help, stemming from love and mercy, much like a parent's deep bond with a child, exemplified by God's character and Jesus's actions (healing, teaching) and a core Christian call to action. It's more than pity; it's an inner feeling that moves believers to actively show kindness, forgive, and alleviate others' burdens, reflecting God's own compassionate nature.

### **God's Character:**

God describes Himself as compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness (**Exodus 34:6, Psalm 86:15**).

### **Jesus' Example:**

Jesus showed compassion by weeping with mourners, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and teaching the neglected (**John 11:33-35, Matthew 14:14, Mark 1:40-41**).

**The Apostle Paul** defines compassion as an essential, active virtue, urging believers to "clothe" themselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, and humility (**Colossians 3:12-14**). For Paul, this virtue is deeply rooted in God's mercy and involves practical love, such as forgiving others, supporting the weak, and sharing in the emotional experiences of others.

**St. Augustine** viewed compassion (*miser cordia*) as a **paramount Christian virtue**, defining it as a rational, benevolent response to suffering **rooted in love for God and neighbor**. Far from a mere emotion, he argued true compassion requires action to alleviate distress rather than just feeling sorrow, contrasting it with the detached indifference of Stoicism [impassive, unemotional].

**Charles Haddon Spurgeon** emphasized the transformative nature of compassion by highlighting its power to change hearts and communities. He often referenced biblical passages like **Zechariah 7:9-10**, which calls for true justice, mercy, and compassion towards others. Spurgeon believed that genuine compassion, as instructed in these verses, could lead

to profound personal and societal transformation, aligning with the Christian call to love and serve one another selflessly.

**Action-Oriented:**

It's **not just a feeling** but leads to practical help, like bearing one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2) and forgiving others (Ephesians 4:32).

**A Call to Believers:**

Christians are called to clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, and gentleness (Colossians 3:12) and to be instruments of hope and healing.

In essence, Biblical compassion is feeling with someone in distress and being moved by love to act to relieve that suffering, mirroring God's own heart for humanity.

**CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING**

1. How do kindness and compassion serve as bridges in a politically polarized world according to the principles in Ephesians 4:32?

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2. What examples from the Bible illustrate the concept of compassion as described in the context, and how do they reflect God's character?

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**EXPLORE THE TEXT**

**II. Christlike Conduct (4:32b)**

*“...forgiving each other...”*

**What is biblical forgiveness?**

**Biblical forgiveness**

The act of pardoning an offender as taught in the Bible. It involves letting go of resentment and the desire for retribution, reflecting God's forgiveness of humanity's sins. It is often associated with repentance and reconciliation, emphasizing love and compassion. (**Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; Luke 17:3-4**)

### **Rooted in God’s Forgiveness Through Christ**

Ephesians 4:32 emphasizes the importance of **compassion and forgiveness** among believers, rooted in God's forgiveness through Christ. The passage highlights a reciprocal dynamic: **divine forgiveness** is accessible **only when we forgive others**, as God withholds forgiveness from those unwilling to forgive (**Matthew 6:14-15**). This principle is not punitive but liberating, serving as a safeguard for mental and emotional wellbeing. Forgiveness is a conscious decision, allowing believers to move beyond past offenses by treating offenders as if the wrongs never occurred.

### **A Standard for Believers to Emulate**

Paul's teaching mirrors God's character, who promises not to hold our sins against us, setting a standard for believers to emulate (**1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6**). God's forgiveness through Christ is complete, and when accepted through faith, it becomes ours. Interpersonal forgiveness is thus anchored in **divine grace**, making it both a response to what we've received and **a reflection of God's nature**. This approach encourages believers to embody the grace and forgiveness they have experienced in their relationships with others.

### **What Forgiveness is *Not!***

Misconceptions abound when the word *forgiveness* is mentioned. Some think forgiveness is the equivalent of *excusing* sin ... saying that what was wrong is now right. Yet this is not the example of forgiveness that Jesus displayed. When He encountered the mob of men eager to stone a woman caught in adultery, He chose not to stone her; however, never did He *excuse* her. Instead, He said, “*Go, and sin no more*” (**John 8:11**). To help correct any confusion, you need to know *what forgiveness is not!*

***Forgiveness is not*** circumventing God’s justice or letting the offender “off the hook.” It is allowing God to execute His justice in His time and in His way (**Romans 12:19**).

***Forgiveness is not*** waiting for “time to heal all wounds.” ...

It is clear that time doesn’t heal wounds—some people will not allow healing.

**Ephesians 4:31-32** instructs believers to remove negative behaviors—bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice—and replace them with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness, modeling their actions after the forgiveness received from God through Christ.

### **Is Forgiveness the same as Reconciliation?**

No. Forgiveness is different from reconciliation. Forgiveness focuses on the offense, whereas reconciliation focuses on the relationship. Forgiveness requires no relationship. However, reconciliation requires a relationship in which two people, in agreement, are walking together toward the same goal. The Bible says,

*“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?”*  
(*Amos 3:3*)

*Forgiveness is not* the same as reconciliation....  
It takes two for reconciliation, only one for forgiveness.

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

3. How does Ephesians 4:32 emphasize the importance of compassion and forgiveness among believers?

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4. What is the reciprocal dynamic mentioned in Ephesians 4:32 regarding divine forgiveness and forgiving others?

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### EXPLORE THE TEXT

#### III. Continuous Commitment (4:32c)

*“...just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*

**Ephesians 4:32** encourages believers to be kind, compassionate, and forgiving, mirroring the forgiveness they have received from God through Christ. Similarly, **Luke 17:3-4** challenges believers to forgive repeatedly, even if someone sins against them multiple times. This scripture illustrates forgiveness as a lifelong practice, requiring believers to maintain a forgiving attitude and to embody the principles of love and reconciliation consistently. Together, these passages underscore that forgiveness is a vital, ongoing aspect of Christian life, essential for spiritual growth and harmonious relationships.

#### **Jesus is our Model for Continuous Commitment**

How did Jesus show commitment?

While on the earth, Jesus underscored the fact that He had a mission and that He was committed to fulfilling it. Luke wrote that Jesus declared his primary mission was to find and redeem [liberate, save, restore, forgive] sinners (**Luke 19:10**). Jesus also declared, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (**John 4:34**). He followed through.

Without Jesus fulfilling his assignment, life would be totally different. There would not be hope for a future, because there would be no path back to having a relationship with Father

God. Before he returned to Heaven, Jesus commissioned believers to be just like him, while spreading word of what he had accomplished through his sacrifice.

**Is there hope for those who fail to emulate Jesus by failing to forgive?**

Yes, reconciliation with God is always possible through repentance and faith. The Bible teaches that God is merciful and forgiving, willing to restore those who turn back to Him with a sincere heart. In **1 John 1:9**, it is stated, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This emphasizes that acknowledging our shortcomings and seeking God's forgiveness can lead to reconciliation.

**CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING**

5. How does Ephesians 4:32 encourage believers to practice forgiveness?

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6. What does Luke 17:3-4 teach about the nature of forgiveness in a believer's life?

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**LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

Think about it!

- How can reflecting on God's forgiveness towards us inspire you to forgive others?

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- In what ways can practicing forgiveness strengthen relationships within a community?

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**Resources:**

Adult Questions for LESSONMaker, LOGOS Bible Software

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