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FORGIVENESS

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Focus On Mission:
Transformative Christian
Leadership Series

FORGIVENESS

KENT R. HUNTER

with TRACEE J. SWANK

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Scripture references in this book are from *The Message* version. Why? According to the brilliant translator, Eugene Peterson, it's not meant to be a scholarly study Bible. It's meant to be a life-learning, engaging Bible that helps you to appropriate God's teaching to everyday life. God's plan is to effectively change your life through the divine power of His Word.

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Introduction: Grace—Full of Faith

Perhaps you have heard this definition of *grace*: “**God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.**” *Grace* can be defined as *undeserved kindness*. This is the foundation of God’s love for us. It is not the way the world usually works. Yet, it perfectly defines the mission of Jesus.

Someone once said, “If you find the perfect church, don’t join it. It wouldn’t be perfect any longer.” In truth, you will never experience a perfect church. The Church is not a camp for those who are perfect. The Church is a hospital for sinners.

The miracle is not that Christ-followers are perfect. The real miracle is that we are forgiven. A second miracle reflects the fact that—when believers focus on their mission—unbelievers meet Jesus and experience grace.

God is not silent about our human failures. The Bible is quite clear about sin. Yet, there is abundant focus on God’s grace, the forgiveness Jesus nailed to the cross. His death and resurrection became our gift from God.

The opposite of grace is legalism. From the world’s perspective, it goes like this: You break the law, you pay the fine—or go to prison.” That is society’s approach. It is an imperfect world.

Yet, within that world there exists the Kingdom of God. God’s grace won’t always get you out of jail, but it does much more.

You experience total forgiveness from the ruler of the universe.
You are spiritually free—even if, from the world's perspective,
you are still in jail.

You are not perfect—and never will be—this side of heaven.
We are forgiven. That is amazing grace!

God's Kindness and Justice: A Call for True Repentance

Our world is full of people who do not acknowledge God. In Romans 1, Paul says something astonishing: If you don't acknowledge God, God will quit bothering you!

Of course, being created free to choose—not a puppet—you can choose to ignore God. What awesome power! You have the power to kick God out of your life. That's a scary thought, isn't it?

What happens when people kick God to the curb of life? In verses 28-32, there is a list. Anything sound familiar? The list includes: rampant evil, grabbing and grasping, backstabbing, envy, killing, bickering, cheating, God-bashing, bullies, swaggerers, windbags—maybe late-night TV, talk radio, and gossipers.

Paul says they invent ways of wrecking lives: ditching their parents and being “stupid, slimy, cruel, coldblooded.” BUT—deep down, they know better: “They know perfectly well they're spitting in God's face. And they don't care...!”

In Romans 2, Paul says those people are on a downward spiral. Then, however, he turns attention on those of us who are not obviously and intentionally rebellious toward God.

Paul warns us NOT to point the finger and criticize as a way of evening up or ignoring our own issues. God sees right through that.

So, in chapter 1, Paul lays into the belligerent sinners. In chapter 2, he turns to Christians who are arrogant because they think they aren't, in their minds, as bad as the others. But we all need a Savior, all the time. You, me, no one can hide their sinful nature from God.

Paul says *real life* is for people as God defines it, not as we define it.

Paul pleads, "But if you embrace the way God does things, there are wonderful payoffs" (Romans 2:9-11) He says God's law is woven into the fabric of our creation. Deep inside, we get nudged about right and wrong. The message of God through Jesus makes all the difference.

What a message for Christians and churches that point the finger at "bad" people—as if we are good! We are not good. We are forgiven.

Grace Through the Cracks: The Miracle of Forgiveness and Redemption

Do you want to see an absolutely amazing miracle? Then look how God uses ordinary human beings as part of His plan to rescue the world from eternal ruin.

If you knew everything that God knows about your pastor, other Christians, and yourself, you might throw up in disgust. But God doesn't! What does He do? He sacrifices His Son on the altar of a cross—as Paul says in Ephesians 1:3-10.

That God would use human beings like you and me to represent Jesus and God's plan for eternity is beyond comprehension. It makes no sense to us. Why?

Because we aren't God. We can't fully comprehend His love and forgiveness. We can only accept it. Paul continues by saying that Jesus is our "get out of jail free" card. Actually, we get out of hell free.

Paul says, "Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds" (Ephesians 1:7-8). So, what disqualifies you from being used by God to change the eternal destiny of others? The answer? A big fat zero—nothing!

Can God use an adulterer? A murderer? He already has! Do you know about David, the adulterer? Or Paul, the murderer, the persecutor of Christians?

Human beings have a tendency to crucify people. The Pharisees—religious people—were behind Jesus' death on the cross. Likewise, we have the temptation to dish out penalties and punishment for people who sin—and we all have our favorite, selective sins. (They're usually the ones that we don't have a problem with.)

Paul says something amazing in Ephesians 1:7-10: "...we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds." In case you missed it, Paul continues, "And not just barely free, either. *Abundantly* free!"

The Apostle Paul was either a lunatic or understood more about God than most of us comprehend. How in the world could God use a bunch of sinful crackpots to shine the light of Christ in the darkness of this world? The answer? Through the cracks!

This is a mystery and a miracle all at once. Jesus uses sinful people like you and me as the conduit of His grace and forgiveness to others in the name of Jesus Christ. We're the pots, but He's the light. Imagine that!

Stay the Course: Finding Grace in a Flawed Church

Ever meet a church hopper? Perhaps you are a church hopper. These folks have a long list of churches where they have attended. They stay awhile and then move on, not because of a job change or relocation but because they discover the people in the church—even those on staff—aren't perfect. Really?

What about you? Are you looking for the perfect church? Let me break the news to you: It will never occur. You can't find a church that's perfect as long as you are there. Or as long as I am there. Or anyone else who is a human being.

The local church isn't a place of perfection. It is a hospital for sinners. It's a community of *grace*: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. There will be bad behavior in churches as long as people are there.

In the letter from James in the New Testament, we are faced with the dirty laundry of church people. He writes, in James 5:9, "Friends, don't complain about each other. A far greater complaint could be lodged against you, you know. The Judge is standing just around the corner." That judge is God!

You can become part of the solution or remain part of the problem. In verses 10-11 of chapter 5, James points to the prophets of the Old Testament. He says, "They put up with anything, went through everything, and never once quit...."

Wow! I'm glad I'm not called to be a prophet. Yet, at times, I've had to take a stand for God. It's not fun to be ridiculed. In the Old Testament, prophets were run out of town, even killed. To this behavior, James has amazing words: "What a gift life is to those who stay the course!" (verses 10-11). He continues, "God cares, right down to the last detail."

When I think about all the data satellites can process every second, it blows my mind. But to think about God caring about every detail of everyone's life simultaneously—billions of people—that's amazing! Yeah, that's God.

Given the fact that churches are made up of imperfect people, you would wonder why God chose people to be the carriers of the Good News of Jesus and His love and forgiveness. Why not use angels?

Perhaps it is because God wants to prove something. Even though church people are not perfect, they are forgiven. If they are forgiven, they are forgiving. Out of God's love, God's people are *for giving* forgiveness, *for giving* love, *for giving* Good News about Jesus.

This is God's approach: to use imperfect people to show the way to a perfect Savior. Don't give up on an imperfect church. It's the only kind we've got. Focus on the perfect God, who sent perfect Jesus to imperfect people to give them a perfect dose of forgiveness. That's perfect love!

The Ethics of Grace: Why Forgiveness Should Define the Church

The Church—made of people gathered around Jesus—has a different code of ethics than the rest of the world. When the Church drifts from grace—undeserved kindness—it becomes worldly.

In 2 Corinthians 2:1-11, the Apostle Paul tells the people at the Corinth church that he has chosen not to visit them as he promised in a previous letter. One of his reasons is that the church solved a serious challenge they faced.

Some guy in the church did something terrible. Paul's writing doesn't say what he did, but it sounds like it may have included a behavior that hurt Paul and/or his reputation.

How the apostle responds is textbook advice for churches. Sadly, the tone of many churches today reflects ignorance of the golden nuggets in this portion of Scripture.

Paul says, in verse 4, words I wish we could hear more in churches. In words that are both simple and profound, Paul says: "...love you!"

Where is the love in your church? Is it in the cultural tone of everything? Everyone? Pastors, have you ever stood before your congregation and said these simple and powerful words: "Love you"? Or are you too sophisticated for that?

Whatever happened in the church at Corinth, the people stood up to punish the guy who was out of line. Apparently the man repented, because Paul says, “Now is the time to forgive this man and help him back on his feet. My counsel now is to pour on the love” (verses 5-8).

The apostle challenges the people to “take responsibility for the health of the [your] church” (2:9). Wow! I wish I saw more of that attitude! It’s called *restoration*.

So often, especially when a pastor is caught in sin, instead of restoration, we sacrifice the pastor (and family) on the altar of self-righteousness. It gets worse when denominational leaders are involved. I’ve worked with numerous churches in these situations. I know what happens and why.

Denominational leaders do the *opposite* of what Paul says. Behind their actions? Denominations often have huge endowments—often, millions and millions of dollars. If someone sues and the pastor is found guilty, the offended party will then sue the church and follow the money trail all the way to the denomination. Some attorneys are always looking for deep pockets! It’s despicable and contrary to the Gospel, the way we treat those who have sinned. It’s against everything God’s people stand for. It weakens our reputation among unchurched people. You have to wonder: Where’s the forgiveness? You have to ask: Has anybody read 1 Corinthians: 2:1-11?

Under Spiritual Reconstruction: The Imperfect but Forgiven Church

Some of the nastiest stuff imaginable occurs among Christians. History is full of examples. Those outside the Church—those without a relationship with Jesus—look at some Christian behavior and criticize: “Those people aren’t perfect at all!”

Actually, those “outsiders” have better theology than some Christians who try to disguise the reality that, as believers, we live our whole lives under spiritual reconstruction. In fact, if you are a perfect person, you don’t need a church. But I haven’t met one yet, even the one in the mirror.

That doesn’t mean you get a free ticket to live any way you wish. The Ten Commandments are enough to humble anyone. Until we’re dead, we have a lot of growing to do. We’re not perfect, just forgiven. But that’s huge, isn’t it?

In Romans 13:8-19, the Apostle Paul clears up the confusion. The law code shows us our sin. It demonstrates the need for a Savior. Interestingly, Paul contrasts the law with love. At the end of the day, the love of God and the love for others both go a long way in describing our imperfect journey. We’re not perfect, so we’re under construction, every day, every hour.

So, church people aren’t perfect. Yet, as believers, we are forgiven if we repent. But how can we Christians improve the messes we cause at church and among other Christians? If

you're a believer, part of the lifelong journey—and your love commitment to Jesus—is to spend every day learning more and growing more. That means learning from the Word of God, the Bible.

A weekly sermon is great, but if you feed on God's direction only once a week, you're starving yourself spiritually. A little knowledge can be dangerous! So many Christians are biblically illiterate—starving from spiritual nourishment. Besides that preaching message, you should be reading your Bible personally every single day. You should also be in a small group Bible study where other Christians can help you and you can help them.

Why do so many churches suffer calamities? Because people are not feeding on Scripture every day. When you do, Paul calls it “putting on Christ”: “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires” (Romans 13:14 CSB). It's like putting on your clothes. I shudder at the thought of a bunch of naked people in church. But there's a spiritual nakedness to people who aren't in their Bibles every day. It's embarrassing, and it hurts the cause of Christ. So, get dressed in the Word, put on Christ, and trust the Head of His body, Jesus. He is the Head of your church to grow you beyond a group of immature squabblers.

When Christians Fall: Choosing Grace Instead of Condemnation

In my work, consulting nearly two thousand churches, I have occasionally discovered a staff member who has fallen into a sinful lifestyle. Sometimes it's an addiction to alcohol or prescription painkillers. Sometimes it's pornography or an improper sexual relationship. Sometimes it's a habit of gambling. It can even be a workaholic who is abandoning responsible time with a spouse and children.

As a Christian, what would you do if you stumbled on this type of issue? Would you expose the issue? Would you say, "I'm here to consult the church. I'm a consultant, not a counselor," and just look the other way? Would you recommend the church fire the person but urge counseling? Or would you do all that you could to help the person, protect the person, and restore the person by recommending professional help? And then, would you tell the board, the denominational official? It's not so easy!

One of my greatest disappointments has been to discover the role of some denominational leaders when this sort of issue comes up. They usually remove the person from their job and their church family, and it becomes a public humiliation. This causes people who are weaker in faith to bail out of church because they believed that the staff person was pretty much perfect and not subject to what the rest of the congregation might find as a struggle.

I've seen some pastors treated horribly by denominational officials. When that happens, I think about we Christians sometimes acting like we're the only army ("Onward, Christian soldiers!") that shoots its wounded. And I think about what Jesus would do. Denominational leaders have told errant church workers: You must resign; get help. And sometimes they say, "We have funds at the denominational level to help you get counseling."

However, once the person is restored, those Christian church workers, including pastors, can't get a ministry job ever again in the denomination. This seems odd to me—not Christlike. After doing some digging, I learned that it's all about lawsuits and money. You see, when people sue for "malpractice," attorneys go after the deep pockets. They follow the money trail. Many church bodies have tons of money stashed in endowment funds and other instruments that use legacy donations to create funds. So, they don't want to risk a person who has fallen and then been restored, *but who knows, might fall again!*

In Romans 15, Paul addresses how Christians are supposed to act. In verse 1, he says, "Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us." Paul continues, "Strength is for service, not status."

Is there risk in Paul's approach? Of course! In Romans 5:3-5, Paul continues: "That's exactly what Jesus did. He didn't make it easy for himself by avoiding people's troubles." This text says that Jesus "waded right in and helped out."

Later on, in this same chapter, Paul says that helping those who fall is a characteristic of maturity of faith.

So, do you know someone who has messed up? Someone who has committed a sin—which is the same as any other sin to God but falls on a more egregious scale among human beings? What are you going to do? According to Paul, it's a maturity issue: Grow up and help the person out!

When Christians Get It Wrong: How Grace Transforms Lives

What keeps many people away from God and the Church? One issue that is overlooked too often: the “law behavior” of believers.

Grace is the lens God uses in sending His Son. Grace is Jesus’ willingness to die for us on that hideous cross. Yet Christians easily drift to the law lens. Churches—and church bodies, like denominations—flaunt laws, rules, and legalism like they are God’s lens. Unchurched people pick that up and think, “Who needs that?”

There are many failures among God’s people. Solomon, David, even Peter—who denied Jesus three times to save his own skin. Yet, grace abounds! The grace of God always takes precedence. Yet, all too often, when there is a moral failure of a pastor or church leader, we shoot our wounded. What do people outside the Church see? Legalism! They know in their hearts, “I could never live up to those standards.” A culture of judgmentalism is not attractive to unbelievers. You can find that anywhere.

In Galatians 4:4-7, Paul says, “...God sent his Son, born among us of a woman, born under the conditions of the law so that he might redeem those of us who have been kidnapped by the law.” The image of God is not of a fearful judge but of a loving Father.

If God is your Father, then you are His child. As a child of God, you—and I—need correction, no question. But you don't lose your "inheritance," your life with God, your promise of eternity. Forgiveness and restoration are yours, not condemnation and destruction.

God is love, even if the Church is not. God is love, even if some "Christians" are not. God is love, even if you don't deserve it. Since God is love, and you are His, He loves you so much He sacrificed His only Son. Whoever believes in the Son inherits eternal life—not someday, not if you follow all the rules perfectly, but because you believe.

So, why do church people beat up those who fail, who sin, who fail? Isn't God the ruler of restoration? Isn't that the whole point about Jesus? If we were perfect, you wouldn't need Jesus at all. You might not even want Jesus if you were perfect. Failure brings you to your knees. Failure brings you back to spiritual reality. So, why are Christians so often so mean to those who fail? Jesus clarified: "The sinless one among you, go first: Throw the stone" (John 8:8).

Forgiven to Forgive: The Flow of Grace in the Body of Christ

Forgiveness is at the very center of the Christian faith. Without it, there is no Gospel power. Without it, the Church is not dynamic. Without forgiveness, the body of Christ simply cannot function. Yet, for something so central, forgiveness is often one of the most difficult challenges for believers to live out. Why?

Forgiveness is not natural. It is supernatural. And that makes it possible. It is a miracle. In Colossians 3:13, Paul writes, “Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you” (*The Message*). That is a high calling—one that is often a challenge.

Our natural tendency is to hold on. To remember. To keep score. To protect ourselves from being hurt. Yet, the Gospel tells a different story. We have been forgiven—completely, undeservedly, and sacrificially—through Jesus Christ. Think about that.

Every sin. Every failure. Every moment of rebellion. Covered. Removed. Forgotten by God. Not because He can’t remember. Not because we earned it. Because of His grace.

As members of the body of Christ, that same grace is designed to flow through us—to others. It is a miracle. It is beyond normal

comprehension. Forgiveness is not optional for Christians. It is essential.

A body cannot function if its parts are in conflict with one another. Imagine your hand refusing to work with your arm. Or your foot unwilling to move because it was “offended” by your leg. It sounds absurd. Yet spiritually, this is exactly what happens when believers refuse to forgive. That refusal is spiritual cancer.

Unforgiveness fractures the human body. It fractures the power of Jesus. It is cancer to your church.

Among Christians, unforgiveness creates distance. It breeds bitterness. It disrupts unity. It quenches the work of the Holy Spirit. A church can have great preaching, strong programs, and active ministries. Yet, if unforgiveness is present, the body is unhealthy. It is like spiritual dry rot.

Forgiveness, on the other hand, restores. It is a miracle of God. It heals relationships. It rebuilds trust. It opens the door for reconciliation. It allows the body of Christ to function as it was designed. It is the miracle of spiritual rebirth.

However, let’s be clear—forgiveness is not about pretending nothing happened. It is not about minimizing hurt. It is about releasing the debt. It is about choosing not to hold someone hostage for their failure. It is not about another crucifixion in any form. It is about trusting God with justice. It is choosing grace instead. It is fueled by spiritual love. It is supernatural. You can feel it—if you are a Christ-follower.

In the body of Christ, forgiveness is not a one-time act. It is a lifestyle. It produces grace through a resurrection of love. Someone will fail you. Leaders will disappoint. Fellow believers

will say and do things that hurt. This is not an exception—it is the reality of being part of a body of imperfect people. The miracle is that, in spite of human pollution, God really can make all things new again.

So, what do we do? Do you see the perfect light at the end of the imperfect tunnel? And, as imperfect followers of perfect Jesus, how do we respond?

We forgive—again and again. Why? Because we have been forgiven.

We forgive because we *can* forgive. We forgive because we are forgiven. We forgive because Jesus forgives.

Even though we don't comprehend—we can't comprehend—what we believe. So we forgive. And the more we forgive, the more we feel it. It is called grace.

The church becomes a powerful witness to the world when it models this power of grace. In a culture that cancels, Christ-followers restore. In a world that holds grudges, God's followers release.

Forgiveness is not weakness. It is strength rooted in God's love. It is the power that impacts the world.

And when it flows freely through believers, a church becomes exactly what it was meant to be—a living demonstration of God's grace. That changes this world, one person at a time.

Breaking the Chains: How Forgiveness Sets the Church Free

Unforgiveness is *heavy*.

It weighs on the heart. It clouds the mind. It drains spiritual energy. Often, those carrying it don't even realize how much it is affecting them.

In Matthew 18:21-22 (*The Message*), Peter asked Jesus a very practical question: "Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?" Jesus replies, "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven." In other words, stop counting.

Forgiveness in the body of Christ is not about limits. It is about freedom. Jesus goes on—in that same chapter—to tell a story about a servant who was forgiven for an enormous debt—but refused to forgive someone who owed him a small amount. The message is clear: When we fail to forgive, we forget how much we have been forgiven. Unforgiveness doesn't just affect relationships—it imprisons the heart.

Some people think that holding on to unforgiveness gives them control. It feels like justice. It feels like protection. In reality, it creates bondage. You are tied to the offense. You replay it. You carry it. You relive it. Forgiveness breaks that chain.

It doesn't excuse what happened. It doesn't mean there are no consequences. Yet, it releases you from the burden of carrying it. In the body of Christ, this is essential.

A church filled with unforgiveness is a congregation that is stuck. Growth is hindered. Relationships are shallow. Trust is fragile. The mission is compromised. Why? Unforgiveness takes up space that was meant for grace.

When forgiveness becomes the culture, everything changes. People feel safe—and become honest about their struggles. Confession becomes normal. Restoration becomes possible. The church is not a place of perfection but God's gift of transformation.

Forgiveness creates freedom—not just for individuals but for the entire body. It allows a church to move forward without the weight of past wounds. It opens the door for the Holy Spirit to work in powerful ways. It reflects the heart of Jesus. Even on the cross, He said, "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing" (Luke 23:34 *The Message*).

That is the standard. It is the model. It is our calling. The question is not whether forgiveness is needed. The issue is: What are you still holding on to?

Until you release it, it will continue to hold on to you. When the body of Christ learns to live in forgiveness, you experience a level of freedom that changes everything.

One Body, One Grace: Forgiveness as the Glue of Unity

Unity in your church is not automatic.

It is not achieved by shared preferences, similar backgrounds, or common opinions. In fact, the body of Christ is intentionally diverse—different people, different personalities, different perspectives, different spiritual gifts.

So, what holds it all together?

Grace. If you know Jesus, you understand grace. Grace is “God’s riches at Christ’s expense.”

At the center of grace is forgiveness.

In Ephesians 4:31-32, Paul writes, “Make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting, profane talk. Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you” (*The Message*). That is the spiritual glue of unity.

Without forgiveness, diversity breeds division. Differences become disagreements. Disagreements become conflict. And conflict, left unresolved, fractures the body of Christ. However, forgiveness interrupts that cycle. It creates space for understanding. It diffuses tension. It restores relationships. Forgiveness allows unity to exist even in the presence of differences.

The early church was incredibly diverse—Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, men and women, people from different cultures and backgrounds. What held them together? It was not uniformity. It was the grace of God expressed through forgiveness. The same is true today.

Every church has conflict. All congregations struggle with misunderstandings. Every church has some people who—at some time—hurt each other, intentionally or unintentionally.

The issue is not whether conflict will occur. It is: How will the body respond? How will you deal with it? Will you divide? Or will you forgive?

Forgiveness does not eliminate differences. It redeems them. It allows the church members to move forward together, even when it would feel easier to walk away. This requires humility. It demands patience. It requires a willingness to put relationships above “being right.”

That is not easy. Yet it is necessary.

The unity of your church is not simply for you—it is a witness to the world. Jesus said in John 13:35 (*The Message*), “This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.” Forgiveness is how love is demonstrated. It is visible and tangible. It is powerful!

When others—outside the faith—see those who choose forgiveness over offense, grace over bitterness, and unity over division, they experience something very different.

They see Jesus. The body of Christ is spiritually cemented together by grace. Forgiveness is the power that holds us together.

Conclusion: Small Group Study

As you wrap up this study on forgiveness, take a moment to reflect on the remarkable picture Scripture paints of life in God's Kingdom. The Church is not a gathering of perfect performers. It is a community of imperfect people who are being made new through the love and mercy of Jesus. Throughout these sessions, you have explored God's kindness, the power of grace, the reality of human imperfection, and the call to restoration. These truths invite every believer to move beyond judgment, legalism, and fear and into a way of life that models the heart of Jesus to a watching world.

Forgiveness is not just a personal spiritual practice. It is a missional posture. When believers extend grace to one another, support those who stumble, restore those who repent, and create a culture where love is the dominant ethic, the Church becomes a living witness of the Gospel. Forgiveness builds bridges for unbelievers, strengthens relationships within the body, and positions the Church to serve as a beacon of hope. This is not easy work, but it is Kingdom work. It requires maturity, courage, and a commitment to follow Jesus into the messy places where restoration is needed most.

As your group considers next steps, ask God to reveal where He is calling you to put grace into action. Look for opportunities to repair relationships, support someone who is struggling, deepen your engagement with Scripture, and build a culture of

compassion in your church. Transformation happens when believers choose to practice what they have learned. Continue this journey by exploring the rest of the *Focus On Mission* series together. Each resource will equip your group with fresh insights, practical steps, and renewed passion for living as God's sent people in your community.

May these conversations lead you to become a community marked by grace in action. As you grow together, keep returning to the forgiving heart of Jesus. He is still forming His Church through ordinary people who are willing to love, restore, and step boldly into the mission He has entrusted to His followers.

Study Questions

Which theme from this forgiveness study stretched your understanding of grace the most, and why?

How does viewing the Church as a hospital for sinners reshape the way your group thinks about relationships and community?

What practical steps can your group take to build a more grace-filled, restorative culture within your church?

How can your group walk alongside someone who has fallen into sin in a way that reflects maturity, compassion, and mission?

Where have you personally seen God use the “cracks” of your own life to shine His grace to others?

What creative or entrepreneurial approaches to forgiveness and restoration could help your church strengthen its witness in the community?

What rhythms of Scripture engagement or spiritual practices would help your group stay grounded in grace as a lifestyle?

What relationship or situation is God prompting you to approach with renewed humility, forgiveness, or restoration?

What next step will your group take this week to put forgiveness into action and continue journeying through the Focus On Mission series together?



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Our proven process
takes the stress off of
your leadership and
reduces burnout among
pastors and staff.

Here's how it works

①

Discover

What is working? What is not?
What is God's vision
for your church?

②

Diagnose

Identify the ceilings and roadblocks
that are holding you or
your church back.

③

Prescribe

We guide you in creating an
implementation plan to break
through the ceilings and roadblocks
and achieve your goals.

④

See Results

Reach more people, multiply
disciples, and resource leadership.

**Partner with a Church Doctor and break through the
barriers that have held you back.**



Call a Church Doctor!
(800) 626-8515
CallaChurchDoctor.com

CONSULTING & COACHING

Healthy Churches Thrive!/The SEND Movement:

A Spiritual Adventure for Your Church

True transformational change is a spiritual process. This unique transformational adventure uses our most effective tools, resources, and teachings along with a team of committed consultants and coaches to come alongside you as your guide. Members, leaders, staff, and ministry will experience spiritual change and growth to help your church reach more people for Christ in the 21st century.

Diagnostic Assessment

This is a thorough analysis of your congregation's health, strength, and challenges. Recommendations for more effective ministry are shared to help you achieve more for God's purpose. A report is generated that graphically illustrates the church's views, attitudes, and worldviews. These become the mechanisms to develop a strategic plan for recommendations to move your church to action.

Coaching for Church Leaders

Our coaching approach is simple: We help Christian leaders unleash the capacity to realize their God-inspired best in ministry. Our process is based on asset mapping, leveraging your strengths, creating disciplined action plans, and building momentum through accountability and follow-up to help you achieve success.

Finishing Well

This is transition coaching for retiring ministers, staff members, and churches transitioning toward new leadership. Your Church Doctor will help to develop a plan of succession that works. They will help you develop a transition plan philosophy of ministry document; will structure a timetable that honors the retiring staff, assimilates the successor, and serves your church; and will help you avoid transitional pitfalls.

Call 1-800-626-8515

Email info@churchdoctor.org

Scan the code to schedule a call with a Church Doctor today!



About the Authors



Dr. Kent R. Hunter is the founder of Church Doctor Ministries. He believes that God has called him to help Christians and their churches become more effective for the Great Commission, to reach unbelievers and to make them disciples of Jesus Christ. Dr. Hunter is the author of more than 40 books. He has consulted more than 1,800 churches from 80 denominations, as well as nondenominational and independent churches. He developed the SEND Movement, which trains congregational members to become missionaries to those who are unchurched in their social networks. Kent writes the bimonthly Church Doctor Report, found on www.churchdoctor.org. Kent lives on a tree farm in northeast Indiana with his wife, Janet. Kent and Janet have two grown children, Laura and Jon.



Dr. Tracee J. Swank leads Church Doctor Ministries. She is a certified church consultant, Christian leadership coach, StoryBrand Guide, and Business Made Simple Coach. She works with pastors, ministry leaders, and Christian entrepreneurs to help them fulfill their God-given vision and mission in the Kingdom. Tracee holds a master's degree in theological studies and a Doctor of Ministry in Kingdom entrepreneurship. She enjoys speaking at conferences, leading ministry immersion trips, and mentoring leaders in creative, Kingdom-focused projects. When not traveling for ministry, she resides in northwest Ohio with her husband, Matt, and their black Lab, Beckett. She enjoys gardening, cooking, and cheering for Ohio State University. (Go Bucks!)