



## Discussion Guide

Date: 2/8/2026

Sermon Title: How do I forgive my family?

Scripture: Genesis 33:1-11

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

### OPENING PRAYER

*Gracious God, we come carrying stories of love and hurt, especially within our families. Open our hearts as we open your Word. Give us courage to tell the truth, grace to listen with compassion, and trust that you are already at work bringing healing. We place this time in your hands. Amen.*

### OPENING QUESTION:

1. Share a time when someone surprised you by forgiving you for something you didn't expect to be forgiven for. How did that make you feel?

### SETTING THE SCENE IN Genesis 33:1–11:

Jacob and Esau's reunion follows years of estrangement, deception, fear, and unresolved hurt (see Genesis 27). Jacob approaches Esau expecting retaliation but instead encounters mercy. This passage does not erase the past, but it reveals how forgiveness can interrupt cycles of fear, shame, and revenge. John Wesley reminds us that grace is not merely something we believe, but something that forms us for holy living; even in our most complicated relationships.

### DIGGING INTO THE WORD:

Read Genesis 33:1-11 (NRSV). If you're in a group, have members read from different translations like The Message or ESV.

1. Jacob approaches Esau bowing seven times, a posture of humility, vulnerability, and of saying I'm sorry. What do you notice about Jacob's body language and actions? What risks does Jacob take in showing up this way?
2. How does humility function as a first step toward reconciliation?
3. Esau runs to Jacob, embraces him, and weeps in vs 34. What surprises you most about Esau's response? How might forgiveness sometimes come from the person we least expect?
4. In vs 38 Jacob admits, "to see your face is like seeing the face of God." Why do you think Jacob uses this language? How can forgiveness become a holy encounter?
5. In what ways does fear often shape family relationships and the ways we respond to hurt?
6. Esau initially resists Jacob's gift, saying he already has enough. Why might it be hard to *receive* forgiveness or reconciliation?

7. What spiritual practices or conversations might help someone move from bitterness to the place where they can say 'I have enough' like Esau did?
8. What does Jacob's insistence on giving the gift reveal about repentance and repair?

#### **OTHER SCRIPTURE TO CONSIDER:**

Matthew 5:23–24; Romans 5:8; Colossians 3:13

#### **SERMON QUESTIONS:**

1. Pastor Clayton talks about the profound act of Esau did in choosing forgiveness over revenge. What do you think happened during those 20 years that transformed Esau from someone who swore to kill his brother into someone who could embrace him?
2. In the sermon Pastor Clayton talks about the mental toughness in the football illustration. How does the concept of 'playing the next play' apply to your spiritual journey when you're stuck replaying past hurts or failures?
3. From the sermon, we learn that reconciliation is about rewriting the story. What does it mean to you that reconciliation does not require rewriting history or dismissing the wrong that was done?
4. Jacob and Esau had to put boundaries in their life to move forward with their lives. Where in your lives is it healthy to set boundaries?
5. In what ways have you been both Jacob and Esau in your relationships, and what have those experiences taught you about grace?

#### **APPLYING IT:**

1. Be honest: When you've been wronged, how much time do you spend "planning revenge" (even if just mentally)? What does that look like for you?
2. How do we approach family members when we don't control the outcome?
3. What is the difference between forgiveness and forgetting? What role do healthy boundaries play in forgiveness, as demonstrated by Jacob and Esau living separately yet at peace?
4. Is there a family relationship where forgiveness feels unfinished or fragile? What do you think are your next steps. What step i.e. seeking, extending, or accepting forgiveness; feels most challenging for you right now
5. How does remembering God's forgiveness toward us reshape how we approach others? Does it have an impact?

#### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

Reconciling God, thank you for meeting us with mercy. Give us courage to forgive as we have been forgiven, wisdom for what is unresolved, and grace to walk forward in love. Send us out as people shaped by your peace, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### **WAYS TO RESPOND:**

Choose one or more of the following practices this week.

1. Daily Reset Prayer: Each morning this week, pray specifically asking God to help you "reset" rather than "replay" past hurts.



2. Forgiveness Journal: Write about one hurt you're holding onto. Process it honestly, then write a prayer of release.
3. Boundary Assessment: Identify one relationship where forgiveness is needed. Ask yourself: "What healthy boundaries might be necessary as I move toward reconciliation?"

**LEADER NOTES:**

**Be Sensitive:** Forgiveness discussions can surface deep pain. Create a safe space and don't pressure anyone to share beyond their comfort level.

**Clarify Boundaries:** Make it clear that forgiveness doesn't mean staying in abusive situations. Reconciliation and physical proximity are different things.

**Avoid Simplistic Answers:** Resist the urge to offer quick fixes. Some forgiveness journeys take time.

**Follow Up:** Check in with group members during the week, especially those who shared vulnerable stories.

*Remember: The goal isn't perfection but progress. Forgiveness is often a process, not a single event.*