

Luke 17 (Part 1): 1-10 • The Dynamics of Forgiveness

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Verse one begins by saying, "¹ And he said to his disciples," which is a shift. Because you'll remember that chapter 16 ended with Jesus having a conversation with the Pharisees and religious leaders. And dealing with them on the issues of money and so forth.

But now He turns to His followers and He says this very important statement. "² *Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come!*" Now, if you're reading a different translation this morning from the one I am in, which is the ESV, you might have noticed some different wording in your Bible.

This is an interesting passage and I looked up a few of the different translations to see the wording differences. Let me show them to you here. First of all, as we read here in the ESV,

ESV: "*Temptations to sin are sure to come...*"

"*Temptations to sin are sure to come...*" is how it is rendered.

If you have a New American Standard of Bible. It says,

ESV: "*Temptations to sin are sure to come...*"

NASB: "*It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come...*"

"*It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come...*"

The New King James says,

ESV: "*Temptations to sin are sure to come...*"

NASB: "*It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come...*"

NKJV: "*It is impossible that no offenses should come...!*"

"It is impossible that no offenses should come...!"

And then the NIV the most verbose of them all says,

ESV: *"Temptations to sin are sure to come..."*

NASB: *"It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come..."*

NKJV: *"It is impossible that no offenses should come...!"*

NIV: *"Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come..."*

"Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come..."

What's interesting about all those changes is they all center around one single Greek word. And I'll highlight here the areas that are translated into that word.

ESV: *"Temptations to sin are sure to come..."*

NASB: *"It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come..."*

NKJV: *"It is impossible that no offenses should come...!"*

NIV: *"Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come..."*

The ESV uses three words, *"Temptations to sin"*. And the NASB uses the *"stumbling blocks."* The New King James just the single word. *"offenses"*. And the NIV, *"Things that caused people to stumble"*.

All those words are one Greek word. And that is the word, skandalon. Skandalon, and it is an interesting word.

Let me put up the information right out of my Greek lexicon in case for those of you that like to look at the Greek lettering.

Greek Word: σκάνδαλον

Transliterated Word: skandalon

Definition: a snare, a stumbling block, an offense

List of English Words and Number of Times Used

cause for stumbling (1)

hindrances (1)

offense (2)

stumbling block(s) (11)

There it is transliterated. It is the word skandalon, and the definition is: a snare, a stumbling block, and offense. And then you can see the number of times English renderings were used for that Greek word the most. There at the end - stumbling block or stumbling blocks, (plural) is used 11 times at least in the New American Standard Bible.

It literally means to purposely put something in somebody's way, so that they'll lose their footing; so that they will stumble; and so that they will fall down.

And basically what Jesus is saying here to you and I, is that the stumblings that are common to man are going to come. It's part of what it means to live, unfortunately, in a fallen world. We find things that we are offended by. We find things that we are hurt by. We find things that cause us to stumble. And those things create issues in our lives.

That's not the point of what He's saying. The point is what He goes on to add. And that is woe to the one through whom those stumblings come! And this is a very strong statement. And if it makes us uncomfortable, it was meant to. Because of the fact that Jesus is warning us here of something that is very dire. Something that is very dangerous. And that is to cause a brother to stumble. We don't talk about this that much. We probably ought to talk about it more.

And if that first verse doesn't scare you enough. Verse 2 might add to that. It says, *"It would be better for (that person, the person who puts a stumbling block in front of another) for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin."* And one of these little ones speaks not only of children, but also of young believers. Those just learning to follow the Lord.

And we're met here at the beginning of this chapter with very strong language about being careful about how we live our lives, so as to influence people around us. And this is a topic that the apostle Paul also addressed, particularly

in his letter to the Romans. Let me show this one to you as well from Romans 14:21. It says,

Romans 14:21 (ESV)

It is not good to eat meat or to drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

It is not good to eat meat or to drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

I suppose we could shorten that and just say, it is good not to cause your brother to stumble. He brings up issues that were issues in his day. Eating meat that had been sacrificed to a pagan idol. A lot of the Christians really were bothered by that. I think drinking wine is still an issue.

There are Christians who believe that any partaking of wine at all, or any sort of an alcoholic beverage is wrong. And there are others who believe that they have the freedom to partake as long as they never partake unto drunkenness.

And of course, that is what the Bible says, do not drink unto drunkenness. (Ephesians 5:18) But hey, there's some people that think that to drink at all is wrong. How are you going to respond to that brother or sister who believes that it's wrong all the time to drink wine or any other alcoholic beverage? How are you going to respond to them?

The Bible tells you and I, that we have to care about what other people think. That it is wrong for us to put a stumbling block in front of them by our behavior. Because you never know exactly what that person's life is all about.

You don't know if maybe they grew up around alcohol and they saw its devastating effects. You don't know if they themselves were maybe at one point an alcoholic in their lives. And for them even taking a sip is just... It's too much. They can't go there. They just can't go there.

You say you have the liberty and you have the freedom. And biblically speaking you do. But you don't have the biblical freedom to cause your brother or sister to stumble. That you don't have. And it's interesting how we just don't seem to care as Christians, about these sorts of things.

I see social media pictures of Christians raising a glass of wine. Now again, there's nothing wrong from the standpoint that... You can do that. You have

liberty. But do you know everybody who is looking at that picture? Do you know everybody that gets onto your Facebook page? And do you know how they feel about it? Do you know if it's okay for them to see you, as a believer, raising that glass of wine?

No, you don't. So don't do it on social media. Don't do anything that's going to cause your brother or sister to stumble. Don't do it. We don't have a free pass when it comes to the area of caring. You don't get a free pass. You have to care. You have to care how other people think. How other people may feel. Now, within the privacy of your own home, hey, knock yourself out! I mean, I didn't say that literally. But you know what I mean.

The point here is care about other people. You know what it takes to care? It takes love. It takes love. If I care about my brother, if I care about my sister, I'm not going to want to do anything that's going to potentially put a stumbling block in their path.

That's in fact what the apostle John says. Let me show you this from 1 John chapter two. He says,

1 John 2:10 (ESV)

Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

In other words, there's no... In him there's no cause to stumble another. Why? Because he loves his brother. Love is what covers and guards our actions when it comes to how we live our lives so that I don't hurt someone else.

Now, let's face it, there are going to be times when we're going to offend one another. And we're going to hurt one another's feelings. And we're going to hurt one another even badly. What does the Word say in such cases?

Look at verse 3 "*Pay attention to yourselves!*" He says. Which means be on your guard. Watch out. "*If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, 4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him.*"

Now this is a great passage here. We're going to take time to think about it here for a little bit. But you got to know this must have really raised some eyebrows among Jesus's disciples. Because they were raised with the Jewish idea that it was honorable to forgive someone three times. And after that you're done. If you violate more than three times in some area of sin, there's no obligation to forgive. And yet Jesus says, even if it happens seven times in a day and your brother turns to you in repentance, He said, you must forgive.

And it brings up the question, at what point do... At what point is there a point? That's a dumb way of saying it, but you know what I mean. That I might say to my brother, no, I'm done. I'm not going to forgive you. Is there a point where I might say to my sister, no, I'm sorry, I'm not going to forgive you. You've gone over the limit, sort of a thing? And the short answer to that question is no. There is never a point. There's never a point where we say to a brother or sister who offends us, I refuse to forgive you. Because forgiveness is what we do.

Now, the reason people struggle with this area of forgiveness is because they think that forgiveness and reconciliation are the same thing. In fact, they believe that reconciliation is a sign of forgiveness. The fact of the matter is that's not true. I can forgive somebody without throwing myself back into their life or allowing them back into my life. You can forgive.

And people will say to you sometimes, hey, have you embraced this guy? Have you... Or, this person that hurt you, have you invited them over for Thanksgiving? Or, have you done this... or that with this person? And you say, well, no." And they said, well, I thought you forgave them.... See they're throwing something on you that actually is wrong. You can forgive somebody without opening your heart back to that individual.

And sometimes that's even the prudent thing to do when that individual who hurt you is continuing to hurt. Or continuing to live a destructive lifestyle and there's been no changes in their life. I'm still called to forgive them even though they've hurt me. Maybe even badly and several times. I'm still called to forgive even if they're still living that destructive lifestyle. I don't have to open myself up to that destructive lifestyle anymore. Right? But I still got to forgive them.

And if somebody comes along and says, no! If you don't open yourself back up to them, you haven't forgive them. You tell them, hey, you're wrong about that. Because forgiveness is ultimately is between me and God. And sometimes it's impossible to actually go to that person and open yourself back up to them. Because sometimes they're gone. Sometimes they've moved away. Sometimes they've died.

And finally, the Lord begins to work on your heart about the hurt that you've carried because of that situation, because of that person. And the Lord starts moving upon your heart to forgive. And you're like, Lord, I can't forgive this person. They died for heaven's sake. How can I go to them and say, I forgive you?

Now you see, the deal is again, forgiveness is largely between you and God. Have you ever noticed in the Scripture when the Bible talks to you and I about forgiving others, it always connects it with God. It connects it to our relationship with God. And that's an interesting sort of a thing. Let me show you a couple of passages where this happens.

First of all, in Matthew chapter 6. Jesus taught us to pray,

Matthew 6:12, 14-15 (ESV)

...forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. For if you forgive others theirs others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

...forgive us (Okay. We're telling the Lord, I need to be forgiven. But look how that's connected. As I also forgive others who have a debt that they owe me. Right?) *our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. For* (In fact, it goes on to say) *if you forgive others theirs others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

You see the connection? You see, you can't take it away. You can't remove the forgiveness that you and I exchange one to another and disconnect it from God.

And then look at Ephesians chapter 4.

Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, (He could have stopped right there, but he didn't. He went on to say,) *as God in Christ forgave you.*

See the connection? Whenever we're talking about forgiving one another, there's a connection to God. You can't separate the command to forgive from our relationship with the Lord.

Because there's something that God wants you to understand about forgiveness. And that's why it's always connected in the Word. He wants you to understand that no matter what that person, or persons, did to you to hurt you... Now listen, this is going to be hard to hear for some. No matter what happened. No matter what happened to you to hurt you, to offend you, it doesn't hold a candle to what you did against God.

Now, that's hard to hear. Because some people will say, now, wait a minute here, pastor Paul, you don't know what that person did to me. I've never done that to anyone or to God, against God. You don't understand. You're comparing apples with apples. It's not apples and apples. You cannot compare the sin that you have received from others, the hurt you have received from others, the offenses that you've received from others, to what you've done against God.

Here's why. You see when somebody sinned against you, that was a sinner offending a sinner. What you did against God was a sinner offending a holy, righteous, pure God. And that is a completely different matter altogether. And that's why you can't make that kind of comparison. But that is why God always brings this whole forgiveness thing - with Him - into the equation when He talks about it between us. All right.

Notice how all this talk affects the disciples. This is pretty interesting. Verse 5. It says, *"The apostles said to the LORD, 'Increase our faith!'"* You read this and you're like, yeah, I'm right with you guys. I mean, they hear all this talk about forgiveness. And they're like, I'm going to need more faith for that, if you're calling us to forgive that way.

"And the LORD said, (verse 6,) 'If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.'"

I love His response. Because what Jesus is doing here... And that's the first thing He wants us...

You see, you and I, when we think of faith we always think in terms of how much. We think of small faith. Yeah, he's got some faith. This guy's got a lot of faith. And that's... And we just naturally think along those lines. And this teaching by Jesus, elicits from these men this response of, well, I'm going to

need more faith if that's the case. If that's the way you want us to forgive, man I tell you. Increase my faith! He says, well, It's not so much a matter of having more faith. It's a matter of having faith "period.

Because you see, if you had just the kind of faith that would be equal to a mustard seed. The smallest of the herbal seeds. He said, you would have enough faith to say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and cast into the sea. If you had just that much faith. You see, it's not a matter of having more, it's just a matter of having some. It's a matter of having faith period. Oh, Interesting! But again, we think along the lines of, I need more.

But what's interesting about Christians, we forget that we can compartmentalize our faith. In other words, I can have faith to believe that what Jesus did on the cross was enough to forgive me for all of my sins. And I have no problem with that. And I never waiver. And I can have faith to believe in this, and that, and this, and my marriage, and my family, and da da da...

But when it comes to faith like, over here. (Pastor Paul uses his hands to indicate compartmentalizing) Maybe this little compartment is my health. Or maybe over here - my finances. I address a situation like that, and suddenly I'm in a tailspin. And it's like, well, wait a minute, Paul, you had so much faith. Don't you believe you're a Christian? You're saved. Yeah, I don't have any problem believing that. It's just this area here." And that happens to us.

And it could be an issue of forgiveness. It could be in the area of forgiveness that you are struggling with your faith. And I think people do because they see it is so overwhelming. They see it is so potentially overwhelming. How in the world? How in the world, can I forgive this person? Or this family? Or this? How in the world can I forgive after what they did?

Jesus says, I want you to know that through Me there is power. And if you had enough faith in Me, faith like a mustard seed, you could say to that mulberry tree be uprooted. Why a mulberry tree? I always thought it's interesting. Why not a fig tree? How about a cedar of Lebanon? He picked a mulberry tree.

You know what's interesting? The Jews would regularly talk about mulberry trees. The rabbis actually taught that the mulberry trees roots would go so deep into the ground that they were so firmly rooted. The roots could last, they said up to 600 years. That's pretty deeply rooted. I love the fact that as Jesus is talking here about the faith to forgive, He's talking about uprooting a mulberry tree. And He's talking about something that it would be otherwise probably impossible.

Here's the point. I think some Christians, some people believe that their unforgiveness runs so deep, and it is so rooted in the very fabric of their lives, that they wonder if there's any possible way they could ever be free from this sort of a thing. And Jesus wants you to know it is possible with just the faith of a mustard seed. It is possible.

You can uproot that resentment, that bitterness and that anger, and it can be cast into the sea. And that sea represents freedom. Freedom from bitterness, freedom from anger, freedom from unforgiveness. Because a person who is stuck in unforgiveness is dealing with the worst kind of slavery that a person can deal with.

And the reason it's so bad is because it's because it's self-created. We tend... We get hurt by people and we think it's their fault that we're unable to forgive them. I'm in this bitterness, I'm in this area of bitterness in my life because of you! No, you're in this area of bitterness because of your response to what they did. It is a self-made prison. And that's what makes it so horrible.

The question is: Are you sick and tired enough of this self-made incarceration, that you're ready to lay it down before the Lord? Do you know how much He forgives us every single day? Do you know how much every single day He forgives us for our stuff?

Well, here's the deal. He calls you and I to do the same. You and I are called by God to be forgivers just like Him. And when you boil forgiveness down to its smallest element, it's all about obedience. It's about obedience. It's about obeying Him in this calling that He's placed upon our life to forgive. And where God calls you and I to obey, He gives us the power to obey. Do you believe that? Did you hear what I said? I said, where He calls you to obey, He gives you the power to obey.

Let me show you a passage. It's out of Philippians chapter 2, and it says,

Philippians 2:13 (ESV)

...it is God who works in you, both to will that is to have the desire and also to work and that is to do his good pleasure.

...it is God who works in you, both to will that is to have the desire and also to work and that is to do his good pleasure.

God works in you, both to desire to obey, but also to walk out your obedience. And again, that's just a repeat of what I said, where God gives you the command

to obey, He gives you the power to obey. He doesn't just say, do this when it's impossible for you to do it. He says, do it and I'll give you the power to do it.

And that is so true when it comes to the issue of forgiveness. And that means that the forgiveness that you've recognized in your life as so deeply rooted, like that mulberry tree, is something that is not too strong for Him to conquer. Even though it is too strong for you. And that's an important thing to admit. Lord, I can't do this. I can't pull up this mulberry tree.

Have you ever tried to pull up a tree by the roots with your bare hands? Oh! Talk about an exercise in futility. I can't even get a bush out of my yard, without dying over the thing.

But to think about something that is so deeply rooted in our lives. But by inviting God to remove that root of unforgiveness from your heart. Oh! And let me make this point. This is important. By coming to the Lord, and inviting Him to do a work in your heart about that unforgiveness. That is in no way minimizing the hurt that you've suffered. Okay?

I believe there's a lot of people when we talk about forgiveness, when we talk about giving this thing over to the Lord, there's a sense in which they think that we're minimizing their pain. In other words, we're communicating somehow to them like your pain really doesn't matter. And it's like we're just saying, oh, get over yourself and give it to God.

No, that's really not what's going on. What you're doing is you're inviting the Lord, you're surrendering your pain to the Lord. You're acknowledging the fact that, this hurt bad! I mean, this just... This wrecked me and I'm giving You now this thing!

But more than that, giving over your unforgiveness to the Lord, is a way of saying to God, I relinquish my right to hold this against this person any longer in any form of judgment. And I now lay this at Your feet as the final ultimate judge. You are the judge. Lord, I give it to You. I step back. I am not certified. I'm not qualified to judge in this case. Nor do I want any part of it. I release this judgment. Because you do know people that unforgiveness is judgment. You do know that. Right?

When you are unforgiving toward the hurt that's been caused you, you are judging. And you are putting yourself in that position of the final judge. But by releasing this, you're telling the Lord, You are the final judge. I give this to You.

I trust You to take care of this situation. I choose to release this through the power of the Holy Spirit. And I choose to forgive.

And we do that Christians, because it's what we're called to do. It's what servants do. God commanded us. He said, hey, even if it's seven times in a single day, forgive is what you're called to do. Oh, but it's so hard. Actually, it's not.

You know what? It's... You know what's hard about the whole issue of forgiving? It's letting go of my right to be angry. It's letting go of my right. I have a right. I'm justified in my anger. I'm justified in my bitterness

And so you may be. The point is, are you willing to let it kill you? Because that's what it's going to do. We forgive because it is what we're called to do. And because we are also called to live in freedom. And you'll never be free as long as you have un-forgiveness in your heart.

I want you to see how Jesus illustrates this thing. Look at verse 7. He says, "*Will any one of you who has a servant (who's... he's out) plowing or (he's) keeping sheep (would you) say to him when he has come in from the field, (Okay! Hey,) 'Come (on in)... recline at (the) table'?*" With me. Let's have dinner. No.

He says, "*Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward, (then) you (can) eat and drink?'*"

And then look at this question. Verse 9. "*Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded?*" That's a rhetorical question. Meaning that the answer is implied. And the implied answer of course is no. He's not going to thank his servant for doing what he was told to do. He's a servant. You tell him to do something and you expect him to do it.

You and I have been given a command from God to forgive. Now, when you get around to it, don't expect a big pat on the back. It's what you were called to do. It's what you were born to do in Christ. And it's what He commanded you to do. And as a servant, we should then...

Well, go on look with me in verse 10. "*So you also, (and this is the point of the story) when you have done all that you were commanded, (And that's the case for us in forgiveness. He says you ought to) 'say, 'We are unworthy servants;*

we have only done what was our duty." Right? Forgiveness is our duty. It's your duty to forgive.

It's interesting. If you were to do a Google search on the subject of forgiveness and getting past unforgiveness, you'd have a lot of reading on your hands. If you decided to visit every website that was potentially listed there. Because there's a lot online on forgiveness. And you read what people are saying and it becomes very apparent that they're looking for answers. They want to know how to get from where they are to where they want to be.

And frankly, there are examples that you can find online of people who have modeled forgiveness. You do know that Jesus isn't the only one that modeled forgiveness. Right? A lot of people have. And they've done a good job.

Hey, even in the Bible, Stephen, he's sitting there being stoned to death. And he looks up to heaven, and he says, Lord, don't lay this charge against them. That's pretty amazing talk coming from somebody who's literally on his last few dying breaths before he dies.

There's other people who have done a pretty good job of modeling forgiveness. And those examples may inspire you. But there's one thing they can't do. They can't give you the power to forgive. You see, inspiration and power are not the same thing.

You may be inspired by reading an example to say, you know what? I'm going to forgive. I'm going to be free from this finally. And I'm going to forgive this person. But you know what? You're only going to be doing it in your own strength. And that doesn't work. Only Jesus, can not only inspire you through His example, but He can give you the ability, the power, to be able to walk in forgiveness.

Every so often, I get asked the question if the Bible says anything about forgiving ourselves. And my answer is usually always the same. Honestly, it doesn't. The Bible does not specifically speak to the matter of self-forgiveness. But that doesn't necessarily mean you don't need to do that. Because I think self-hatred is a real deal. I mean, I think it's a real thing. In fact, I think that some self-destructive behaviors that happen in people's lives are at their root, caused by self-hatred.

But honestly, it's like, who cares whether I... Here's the deal. I don't think Satan much cares whether you hate yourself or hate somebody else. I really don't. I

really don't think he cares because either way he's gotcha. Because he knows that you're a bundle of self-thought.

Because don't you understand people that when you're filled with unforgiveness towards someone, you're filled with your own thoughts. You're filled with your own hurt. And you're just sitting and just simmering, festering, on your own internal hurt. That's what unforgiveness is all about.

So you see, it doesn't really matter whether you're not forgiving yourself or not forgiving somebody else. Satan doesn't mind. It'll destroy you either way. He doesn't much care. We seem to think that it's a big deal, whether it's self-forgiveness or forgiveness for somebody else. Honestly, hatred is going to destroy you if you hang on to it. Period.

If the threat of destroying yourself isn't enough to maybe get you to make a change, maybe this will be. The God of the universe, who is the ultimate judge, has determined to forgive you based on your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. And who are you to argue with that determination and that judgment? If He has acquitted you, then how do we have the audacity to refuse to do that to ourselves?

One last thing. Over the last few months, I have had the privilege of getting to know a young woman who wrote me, connected with me by email, after finding our teachings on our YouTube channel. And her name is Amanda. And I came to learn through our correspondence that she had written a book about her life. I quickly got onto Amazon and I ordered a copy. And that's the cover right there.



It's called, Fighting For Me. In fact, she has a website set up. I found out that the book is all about her life and her journey, which included some really horrific sexual abuse. And I have to tell you that even though I dug into this book right away, it was very, very difficult reading. Some of the chapters were very hard to get through. Because she's pretty graphic about the pain that she suffered at the hands of her abuser.

But I was also really blessed, toward the end of the book to find out how she came to a point in her life, after really being messed over. Not just about her abuse, but about God. Because she was raised a Jehovah's Witness, which served to only exacerbate the confusion, the judgment, the condemnation and the shame.

And she eventually, and this is the cool part, she and her husband eventually found their way into a Calvary Chapel, where she started hearing about Jesus Christ. And His power to take our hurt, to heal our lives, and to make us into the person that He has called us to be.

And I still correspond with this gal from time to time. In fact, interesting, I had a note from another young woman in India, believe it or not. The northern part of India, who'd been writing me and asking me Bible questions. Pastor Paul, what does the Bible say about...? What does the Bible say about...? And then suddenly she wrote me this note here a few weeks ago about how she had been sexually abused as a young woman.

And I so feel out of my element sometimes ministering to people who have gone through that sort of stuff. I wrote her. And I said, Hey, I met someone that I want to connect you to. And these two gals have been emailing back and forth between California and India.

And I got the sweetest note from the gal in India just a couple, about a week ago. And she said, I have such peace and I've determined to put my life in the hands of Jesus. And it was just... Oh, it was just the thing that every pastor wants to read, from somebody who has gone through an incredibly difficult season.

I bring this up because there may be some here who have endured this level of pain, this level of betrayal, and hurt. And you're like that mulberry tree that have roots that go down into the ground so deeply that you're looking at this and saying, I don't know if there's any hope." And I want you to know there is hope.

And I'd love to...(Pastor Paul holds up Amanda's book) Grab a copy of this. We have these in our bookstore. In fact, I stole this one. Amber, I have to get it back to you. I forgot to bring mine from home. But we do have some.

Great, great book, Amanda. I think her last name is pronounced Zarate. Anyway, great testimony of the power of God to break the power of unforgiveness and bitterness. And replace it with peace and joy. Not a perfect life, but peace and joy.

Let's stand together. We're going to have people up front here to pray with you. Our prayer team will be available as people are filing out. And you're welcome to come up for prayer if there's something on your heart that's pressing.

Father, we thank You so much for Your Word. And we thank You for the power to destroy unforgiveness. We thank You, Lord God, for the power to be free from self-made prisons.

We thank You, Lord, that You are the Prince of Peace. And the One who not only commands us to forgive, but who empowers us to forgive. Lord, our eyes are looking to You as the source of what we need.

We trust in You, Lord. We lay our lives at Your feet that Your work might go on. Be with us we pray. In Jesus precious name, amen.