



# abclinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on August 16-17, 2008

## this week's coreverse

*Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.*

**Luke 7.47 NIV**

## usingabclinks

### Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days, you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage from scripture. Other days, you'll be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying and answering questions.

### Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions acts as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members for more information on ABC Small Groups or go to [adabible.org](http://adabible.org)>ministries>small groups.

See [adabible.org](http://adabible.org) for abclinks archives.



## Part Five of a Five Part Sermon Series

### "God as Host"

Some childhood experiences go a long way in shaping our spiritual virtues. There's a conversation I had with my mom which made an incredible impression on me as a very young boy. It began to shape in me the value of forgiveness.

We had traveled to Illinois on a family vacation. Many of my mom's family resided in a little farm town near the Mississippi River where they had all grown up. We'd spend time visiting with my grandma and hanging out with cousins. When Sunday rolled around, we'd gather at their local church where mom grew up. Much of her family still attended this wonderful little church. I don't know why I noticed this but it seemed odd to me that my Uncle Lawrence came to church alone. His wife, Mary, one of my favorite aunts, wasn't with him. So I asked, "Mom, where is Aunt Mary? Is she sick?" Trying to be delicate but also honest, mom replied, "No, Aunt Mary goes to another church." In my young mind, I couldn't think of a reason why she would attend another church; her entire family was here. In the car after church, I asked, "So, why doesn't Aunt Mary attend grandma's church?" I'm thankful that my parents didn't skirt my question and gave me an honest answer.

Mom told me a story of how Aunt Mary attended grandma's church for many years and was very active. But there was a situation that ended all that. She was part of a decorating committee for a missionary event and she had spent a lot of energy putting together a bulletin board in one of the hallways. She came in one Sunday to see that someone had taken her work down and had redecorated her bulletin board. Hurt and angry, she vowed to never step foot in that church again. And to my knowledge, 30 years later, she still has not. Using this as an opportunity to teach me a profound life lesson, mom said "Phil, not being willing to forgive is a painful way to live. God forgave us. We need to forgive others."

That simple story was the first opportunity I can remember where I wrestled with the concept of living a life of forgiveness versus a life of unforgiveness. The pain, anger and bitterness was so strong in my aunt that she chose to worship for decades in a church in another town apart from her family and friends. All over an unresolved incident.

At my mother's funeral, a man approached my family to say he was sorry for some harmful things he had done and said to my parents 10 years prior. He had led a movement to force my dad to resign from the church he had pastored. One by one, he talked to each member of my family expressing his regret for what he had done and how he had done it. I was fortunate to be within earshot when this man offered his apologies to my dad. Dad's response to him was, "I forgave you many years ago. I've learned that it's no way to live having unforgiveness in my heart." Tears of relief flowed from this man's eyes.

***"Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." Ephesians 4. 32 NLT***

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# daily readings



## dayone

Read Luke 7.36-50

Jesus finds Himself in the home of the Pharisee named Simon who doesn't offer Jesus the courtesy of typical Jewish hospitality. In essence, Simon invites Jesus to his house, then blows Him off. In contrast, a woman with an immoral reputation sees this and goes over the top to honor Jesus' presence.

Contrast Jesus' words to Simon with His words regarding the woman. What differences does He point out? Why?

## daytwo

Read Luke 19.1-10

In another story, Jesus invites Himself into the home of a notorious sinner, Zacchaeus, the tax-collector. Something wonderful comes over Zacchaeus because of his interaction with Jesus. He becomes a giver rather than a thief.

What do you think motivated Zacchaeus to make this incredible turn-around and decide to repay those he cheated four-fold?

## daythree

Meditate on these verses today in light of the stories of Jesus you've read this week.

*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

*Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

*Ephesians 4.31- 5.2*



# small group discussion



## leanin

Where have you been recently that you felt out of place?

## lookdown

Have someone retell the stories above (Simon, the Pharisee and Zacchaeus, the tax-collector).

How did Jesus use their hospitality (or lack of) to teach lessons of forgiveness and restoration?

## lookout

Respond to this statement, "Forgiveness may be one of the toughest things a human can do." Do you agree? Why would this be true?

## lookin

Tell of a time when forgiveness was very difficult for you to give. What were the barriers of forgiveness? Have you resolved this? How?

Why is understanding and experiencing God's forgiveness the key motivator for us to offer forgiveness to others? How does this work together?

What has challenged you the most this week as you've wrestled with the concept of forgiveness? How can the group help?