OPEN YOUR BIBLE
STUDY COMPANION

Forgiveness, Repentance & Reconciliation

What Does Scripture Actually Require When Someone Hurts You?

A printable companion for tracing forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation, trust, restored access, accountability, mercy, and safety across Scripture.

Use this packet beside the full Bible study. Read each passage first. Record what the text says before deciding what it means for your relationship.

STUDY RULE

Do not let one biblical word do the work of five. Forgiveness, repentance, trust, reconciliation, and restored access are related, but they are not interchangeable.

Name: _____

Date started: _____

Study completed: _____

Don't take my word for it - Open your Bible.

Before You Study

Record your starting position honestly. Do not edit it yet. You will return to these answers at the end.

How would I define forgiveness right now?

What do I think repentance requires?

Do I currently believe forgiveness automatically restores trust or relationship? Why?

What have I been taught about forgiving someone who is not sorry?

Which is harder for me personally: extending mercy, telling the truth about harm, or allowing genuine restoration?

KEEP THIS BESIDE YOU

Ask two questions throughout the study: What does Yehovah require of me? What responsibility belongs to the other person? Do not quietly assign both sets of responsibilities to one person.

Five Words We Will Keep Separate

Write a first working definition for each term. Leave room to revise your answer as the passages accumulate.

Forgiveness:

_____

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Repentance:

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Trust:

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Reconciliation:

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Restored access:

_____

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PRECISION CHECK

If one word starts doing the work of all five, stop and return to the passages. Scripture uses different concepts because different questions are being answered.

Study Progress

Check each section after you have read the assigned passage and written your own observations.

- ☐ Romans 12 - What Yehovah Requires of Me
- ☐ Matthew 6 and Mark 11 - The Command to Forgive
- ☐ Luke 17 - "If He Repents, Forgive Him"
- ☐ Matthew 18 - When a Person Refuses to Listen
- ☐ Matthew 18:21-35 - Radical Mercy
- ☐ Repentance - Godly Sorrow, Confession, and Fruit
- ☐ Enemy-Love - What If They Never Repent?
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 5 - "Called a Brother"
- ☐ Titus 3 and 2 Thessalonians 3 - Changed Fellowship
- ☐ Forgiveness, Trust, Reconciliation, and Access
- ☐ David and Saul - Mercy With Distance
- ☐ Joseph and His Brothers - Discernment and Restoration
- ☐ "You Have to Forgive Me" - The Offender's Responsibility
- ☐ What Reconciliation Actually Requires
- ☐ When Reconciliation Is Not Possible Right Now
- ☐ Truth, Safety, Consequences, and Memory
- ☐ If They Never Change - Grief Without Bitterness
- ☐ Forgiveness Without Denial
- ☐ Trust, Access, and Restoration
- ☐ Final Synthesis

What Does Yehovah Require of Me?

READ: Romans 12:9-21

Begin with your own obedience before evaluating the other person's response. Notice the commands that remain yours even when repentance never comes.

TEST THE SAYING

"If you haven't reconciled, you haven't really forgiven." Does Romans 12 actually say that?

Open Your Bible

What two commands appear together in Romans 12:9 concerning love and evil?

_____
_____
_____

What qualification does Paul place on living peaceably with everyone in verse 18?

_____
_____
_____

According to verse 19, what belongs to Yehovah rather than to you?

_____
_____
_____

What might it mean for another person's evil to overcome you?

_____
_____
_____

Which commands in this passage remain your responsibility regardless of whether the offender repents?

_____
_____
_____

"Forgive Us Our Debts"

READ: Matthew 6:9-15 and Mark 11:25

Take Yeshua's command seriously without making the passage answer questions it does not explicitly address.

COFFEE REFILL

Do not choose Matthew 6 or Luke 17 based on which passage feels safer for your preferred conclusion. Keep both.

Open Your Bible

How does Yeshua connect our willingness to forgive with the mercy we have received?

_____
_____
_____

What warning does Matthew 6 place on a heart committed to resentment or vengeance?

_____
_____
_____

Does Matthew 6 explicitly define restored trust, reconciliation, or access?

_____
_____
_____

What would it look like to obey this command without adding requirements the text does not state?

_____
_____
_____

What other passages would you need before declaring forgiveness and restored relationship identical?

_____
_____
_____

"If He Repents, Forgive Him"

READ: Luke 17:1-4

Watch the sequence carefully. Yeshua places rebuke, repentance, and forgiveness in the same instruction.

TEXT OR INFERENCE?

TEXT: Luke 17 connects repentance and forgiveness. TEXT: Romans 12 forbids personal vengeance. Do not turn either truth into an excuse to erase the other.

Open Your Bible

What does Yeshua tell the disciple to do when a brother sins?

_____
_____
_____

What response does He explicitly connect with repentance?

_____
_____
_____

What does repeated forgiveness after repeated repentance protect us from concluding about a person who genuinely stumbles again?

_____
_____
_____

What does this passage actually say about an offender who does not repent - and what does it not say?

_____
_____
_____

How should Romans 12's prohibition against vengeance shape your response while repentance is absent?

_____
_____
_____

What If the Person Refuses to Listen?

READ: Matthew 18:15-20

Yeshua's process aims at restoration, but persistent refusal matters. Read the passage as accountability within the believing community, not as a secrecy rule for dangerous situations.

TEST THE SAYING

"A Christian should never distance himself from another Christian." Does Matthew 18 support that as a universal rule?

Open Your Bible

What is the first goal of the process in Matthew 18:15?

_____
_____
_____

What changes when the person repeatedly refuses to listen?

_____
_____
_____

Does Yeshua teach that continued refusal should have no effect on fellowship?

_____
_____
_____

Which responsibilities belong to the person bringing the concern, and which belong to the person being confronted?

_____
_____
_____

How should this passage be applied differently when private confrontation could create serious danger?

_____
_____
_____

Accountability and Radical Mercy

READ: Matthew 18:21-35

Do not separate this parable from the accountability passage immediately before it. Matthew 18 requires truth and mercy together.

PRECISION CHECK

If your interpretation protects sin from accountability, reread verses 15-20. If it protects bitterness from mercy, reread verses 21-35.

Open Your Bible

What does Yeshua's answer to Peter communicate about keeping score?

What does the unforgiving servant receive, and what does he refuse to extend?

Does the parable erase the accountability process in verses 15-20?

What happens if we emphasize accountability but ignore mercy?

What happens if we emphasize mercy but ignore accountability?

What Does Repentance Actually Look Like?

READ: 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; Proverbs 28:13; Luke 19:1-10

Repentance is more than distress over consequences. Look for turning, responsibility, confession, and fruit.

TEST THE SAYING

"They apologized, so you have to trust them again." What does Scripture actually establish?

Open Your Bible

What distinction does Paul make between godly sorrow and another kind of sorrow?

What fruit does Paul associate with godly grief?

According to Proverbs 28:13, what does forsaking add to confession?

What does Zacchaeus do that shows more than emotional regret?

How would you distinguish imperfect but genuine repentance from repeated apology without meaningful change?

Fruit Without a Performance Test

READ: Matthew 3:7-10 and 2 Corinthians 7:8-11

Fruit matters, but genuine repentance is not instant perfection. Keep both truths in view.

BALANCE

Do not make apology a magic password. Do not make restoration an endlessly moving finish line.

Open Your Bible

Why would genuine repentance naturally affect behavior?

Does "fruit worthy of repentance" mean immediate perfection?

How might a genuinely repentant person respond when trust is not restored immediately?

How could waiting for fruit become punitive or controlling?

What evidence would be reasonable to notice without creating an impossible probation system?

What If They Never Repent?

READ: Matthew 5:43-48 and Romans 12:14-21

Enemy-love establishes responsibilities that do not depend upon the enemy becoming repentant. It does not automatically turn an enemy into a trusted friend.

A DISTINCTION WORTH KEEPING

Refusing vengeance is not restored trust. Repentance is not remorse. Forgiveness is not identical to reconciliation. Reconciliation is not identical to restored access.

Open Your Bible

Who is Yeshua commanding His disciples to love?

_____

_____

_____

Does Yeshua require repentance before the disciple prays for an enemy?

_____

_____

_____

What does Romans 12 forbid even when someone remains hostile?

_____

_____

_____

Does either passage require an enemy to be treated immediately as a trusted friend?

_____

_____

_____

Which responsibilities still belong to you, and which choices belong to the other person?

_____

_____

_____

"Called a Brother"

READ: 1 Corinthians 5

Paul explicitly distinguishes outsiders from someone who is called a brother while persisting in serious, unrepentant sin.

TEST THE SAYING

"Christians should be more forgiving of believers because they are family." How can family mean both patience and accountability?

Open Your Bible

Was Paul telling believers to avoid every sinful person outside the assembly?

What phrase identifies the person Paul is specifically discussing in verse 11?

What difference does Paul make between those inside and those outside?

Why must this passage not be stretched to cover ordinary weakness, personality differences, or every disagreement?

How might grace be misused if profession of faith shields someone from meaningful accountability?

When a Believer Keeps Refusing Correction

READ: Titus 3:9-11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

Changed fellowship and continued love can coexist. Notice how Paul pairs distance with the command not to treat the person as an enemy.

PRECISION CHECK

Distance is not necessarily hatred. Continued love is not necessarily unchanged access.

Open Your Bible

How many warnings does Titus describe before the relationship changes?

Does Paul command endless argument?

What response does 2 Thessalonians 3 instruct toward persistent disorderly conduct?

How does verse 15 qualify that response?

What is the difference between corrective consequence and personal retaliation?

Keep the Categories Straight

RETURN TO: Luke 17; Matthew 18; Romans 12; 2 Corinthians 7

Now revisit the five terms from the beginning of the packet. Let the accumulated passages sharpen your definitions.

WRITE IT AGAIN

Revise your definitions of forgiveness, repentance, trust, reconciliation, and restored access on the next page.

Open Your Bible

Which passages primarily address the heart and conduct of the offended person?

_____
_____
_____

Which passages primarily address repentance by the offender?

_____
_____
_____

Where does Scripture explicitly command immediate restored trust?

_____
_____
_____

Which of these realities can one person choose alone, and which require another person's participation?

_____
_____
_____

How could confusing these categories pressure a harmed person? How could separating them too rigidly become an excuse never to pursue restoration?

_____
_____
_____

Revised Definitions

Forgiveness:

Repentance:

Trust:

Reconciliation:

Restored access:

David and Saul: Mercy With Distance

READ: 1 Samuel 24 and 1 Samuel 26

David refuses vengeance without pretending Saul is safe. Pay attention to what David does after Saul's emotional admissions.

TEST THE SAYING

"If you really forgive someone, you should give them another chance." Another chance to do what? Be precise.

Open Your Bible

Why does David refuse to kill Saul when he has the opportunity?

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_____
_____

Does David deny that Saul has wronged him?

_____
_____
_____

Does Saul acknowledge wrongdoing? Does David immediately return to life with Saul?

_____
_____
_____

What does David's continued caution suggest about the difference between mercy and trust?

_____
_____
_____

Which two extremes does David avoid?

_____
_____
_____

Joseph and His Brothers: Reconciliation With Eyes Open

READ: Genesis 42-45

Joseph does not retaliate, but the story also does not present reconciliation as blind denial of history.

TEXT OR INFERENCE?

Narrative can reveal wisdom without becoming a mechanical command. Record what Genesis actually shows before building a rule from it.

Open Your Bible

Does Joseph immediately disclose his identity and restore normal relationship?

What changes become visible in the brothers as the narrative progresses?

How is Judah's treatment of Benjamin different from his earlier participation in Joseph's betrayal?

How does Joseph recognize Yehovah's providence without calling his brothers' evil good?

What can this narrative teach about discernment without turning Joseph's exact actions into a universal formula?

"You Have to Forgive Me"

READ: Proverbs 28:13; Luke 17:3-4; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11

The offender does not get to use the injured person's command to forgive as a substitute for the offender's command to repent.

PRECISION CHECK

"Yeshua says you have to forgive me" is not repentance.

Open Your Bible

What responsibilities belong to the person who sinned?

What responsibilities belong to the person who was sinned against?

Can one person repent on behalf of the other?

What would humility sound like from someone seeking forgiveness?

What would entitlement to immediate trust or restored access sound like?

What Does Reconciliation Actually Require?

RETURN TO: Romans 12:18; Luke 17:3-4; Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11

Reconciliation concerns the relationship itself. A relationship cannot be repaired by one person's obedience alone.

TEST THE SAYING

"If you've forgiven them, you need to reconcile." What responsibility in that sentence belongs to the other person?

Open Your Bible

What does Romans 12:18 acknowledge about the limits of one person's control?

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_____
_____

Can a relationship honestly be called reconciled if one person still denies what happened?

_____
_____
_____

Can reconciliation begin while trust is still rebuilding?

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_____
_____

What is the difference between imperfect reconciliation and pretending everything is already repaired?

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_____
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How might demanding immediate normalcy interfere with genuine restoration?

_____
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_____

What If Reconciliation Is Not Possible Right Now?

RETURN TO: David and Saul; Joseph and his brothers

Sometimes the truthful answer is not "never" but "not now." Time can reveal change without becoming punishment.

COFFEE REFILL

Confession happened. Tears happened. Prayer happened. Everyone hugged. Excellent. Now what happens on Tuesday?

Open Your Bible

Did Saul's emotional admissions erase the established pattern of danger?

_____
_____
_____

What changed over time in Joseph's brothers?

_____
_____
_____

What would it look like to use time wisely rather than vindictively?

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_____
_____

What is the difference between "I will never trust you again" and "I am not ready to trust you yet"?

_____
_____
_____

What ordinary-life evidence might help reveal whether repentance is becoming consistent?

_____
_____
_____

When Reconciliation Would Require Pretending

READ: Ephesians 4:25-32

Truth and kindness are not enemies. Biblical reconciliation cannot require one person to deny what happened.

TEST THE SAYING

"Can we just move on?" When is that a healthy desire to stop rehearsing a repented-of offense, and when is it a demand to stop requiring truth?

Open Your Bible

What does Paul command concerning truth?

What does he command concerning anger and corrupt speech?

Does Paul ask believers to choose between truth and kindness?

How could truth be spoken cruelly? How could kindness become dishonest?

What would truthful grace look like in a relationship that is trying to rebuild?

When Safety Changes the Conversation

READ: Proverbs 22:3 and Proverbs 27:12

When violence, stalking, threats, coercive control, serious intimidation, or credible danger are present, direct confrontation is not a universal spiritual requirement.

SAFETY NOTE

If you are in immediate danger, contact emergency services where you live. In the U.S., the National Domestic Violence Hotline offers confidential support and safety planning: 800-799-SAFE (7233), text START to 88788, or visit TheHotline.org.

Open Your Bible

What does Proverbs say the prudent person does when danger is recognized?

_____

_____

_____

Does seeking refuge automatically mean hatred or revenge?

_____

_____

_____

Why might direct confrontation be wise in one situation and dangerous in another?

_____

_____

_____

How can love, forgiveness, and physical distance coexist?

_____

_____

_____

What would wise, confidential help or safety planning protect that a generic "just state your boundary" rule might ignore?

_____

_____

_____

Can There Be Consequences After Forgiveness?

RETURN TO: 1 Corinthians 5 and Romans 12:17-21

Mercy and consequence are not automatically opposites. The heart question is what the consequence is for.

MOTIVE CHECK

Is this consequence serving truth, safety, responsibility, or wise rebuilding - or is it designed to hurt, humiliate, frighten, or control?

Open Your Bible

How can Scripture prohibit personal vengeance while still recognizing relational or community consequences?

_____

_____

_____

What is the difference between vengeance and accountability?

_____

_____

_____

What makes a consequence proportional rather than punitive?

_____

_____

_____

How might removing every consequence interfere with repentance or responsibility?

_____

_____

_____

How can mercy remain present while consequences remain?

_____

_____

_____

What About Forgetting?

"Forgive and forget" sounds biblical, but Scripture does not command emotional amnesia. The important question is what you do with the memory.

TEST THE SAYING

"If you still remember what they did, you haven't forgiven them." Test that claim against Scripture rather than emotion.

Open Your Bible

How might remembering a pattern be necessary for truthful discernment?

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_____
_____

What is the difference between remembering wisely and rehearsing an offense to keep resentment alive?

_____
_____
_____

Can memory remain after forgiveness?

_____
_____
_____

What would it look like to stop using a memory as a weapon without pretending the event never happened?

_____
_____
_____

What are you asking Yehovah to heal in the way you carry this memory?

_____
_____
_____

What Do I Do If They Never Change?

READ: Romans 12:17-21 and Psalm 37:1-9

Scripture does not promise that every broken relationship will be restored in this life. Your obedience cannot depend upon another person's repentance.

WRITE THIS DOWN

I cannot repent for another person. I am responsible for my obedience. They are responsible for theirs. Yehovah remains Judge of both.

Open Your Bible

What does Romans 12 forbid you from taking into your own hands?

_____

_____

_____

What does Psalm 37 repeatedly tell the righteous not to do because of evildoers?

_____

_____

_____

What does it tell them to do instead?

_____

_____

_____

Can you desire someone's repentance without structuring your entire life around waiting for it?

_____

_____

_____

What part of the situation remains yours to steward, and what never belonged to your control?

_____

_____

_____

Grief Is Not the Same Thing as Bitterness

READ: Ephesians 4:26-32 and Psalm 55

Pain is not a moral failure. Grief can remain while vengeance is surrendered. Bitterness moves in a different direction.

TEST THE SAYING

"If you're still hurt, you haven't forgiven." Does Scripture teach that pain, memory, or grief is itself unforgiveness?

Open Your Bible

Does Scripture treat anger itself as identical to sin?

_____
_____
_____

What attitudes does Paul tell believers to put away, and what does he tell them to put on?

_____
_____
_____

Does the psalmist hide the depth of betrayal in Psalm 55?

_____
_____
_____

What is the difference between bringing pain honestly to Yehovah and feeding resentment?

_____
_____
_____

What fruit would suggest bitterness is beginning to govern the heart?

_____
_____
_____

Forgiveness Without Denial

RETURN TO: Matthew 6; Mark 11; Luke 17; Romans 12; Matthew 18

Careful Christians differ over how to describe the precise relationship between forgiveness and repentance. Record what the passages establish before choosing a formula.

TEXT OR INFERENCE?

Do not infer that forgiveness automatically restores trust. Do not infer that lack of repentance gives permission for hatred.

Open Your Bible

Which passages make forgiveness non-negotiable?

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_____

_____

Which passage explicitly connects repentance and forgiveness?

_____

_____

_____

Which passage forbids personal vengeance regardless of repentance?

_____

_____

_____

Which passage recognizes changed fellowship when repentance is refused?

_____

_____

_____

What can you state confidently without pretending one short slogan resolves every interpretive question?

_____

_____

_____

What Does Trust Require?

READ: John 2:23-25; Proverbs 14:15; Proverbs 22:3

Trust involves judgment about reliability. Wisdom neither restores trust blindly nor refuses to notice genuine change forever.

DISCERNMENT

Trust may rebuild slowly, partially, or differently from before. The amount of vulnerability matters.

Open Your Bible

Does Yeshua give identical trust to everyone who expresses belief?

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_____
_____

What do the Proverbs passages say about prudence and believing every word?

_____
_____
_____

How can wisdom about trust coexist with forgiveness?

_____
_____
_____

How might restoring trust too quickly create unnecessary harm?

_____
_____
_____

How might refusing to recognize sustained genuine change become its own form of hardness?

_____
_____
_____

What Does Restored Access Require?

Access is related to trust, but it is not identical to trust. Reduced access can be stewardship rather than punishment.

TEST THE SAYING

"If you love someone, you don't shut them out." When is that a needed warning against coldness, and when is it dangerously simplistic?

Open Your Bible

What kinds of access can exist in a relationship - information, money, responsibility, physical presence, influence, emotional closeness?

Which forms of access might reasonably change after serious wrongdoing?

What would make reduced access an act of stewardship rather than retaliation?

How could access become a tool for control or punishment?

Why does love not require identical access for every person?

What Does Restoration Look Like When Repentance Is Real?

READ: 2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Biblical accountability aims toward restoration, not permanent exile. Grace must remain willing to notice real repentance.

BALANCE

The church that never confronts serious sin is unhealthy. The church that never restores genuinely repentant sinners is unhealthy too.

Open Your Bible

What concern does Paul express about excessive sorrow?

What does he tell the congregation to reaffirm?

What does this suggest about the purpose of discipline?

How can an injured person honor genuine repentance without pretending trust is instantly complete?

What would it look like to keep moving the finish line so that restoration can never happen?

A Biblical Framework for When Someone Hurts You

Use the full study to fill in the biblical reasoning behind each statement. Do not treat this page as a shortcut around the passages.

- ☐ Tell the truth about the wrong.
- ☐ Examine your own heart and conduct before Yehovah.
- ☐ Refuse personal vengeance.
- ☐ Pursue peace where peace is genuinely possible.
- ☐ Confront appropriately when Scripture and wisdom call for it.
- ☐ Take repentance seriously without demanding instant perfection.
- ☐ Distinguish forgiveness from trust, reconciliation, and access.
- ☐ Leave room for genuine restoration.
- ☐ Use wisdom when trust has been damaged.
- ☐ Protect safety where danger is real.
- ☐ Do not confuse grief with bitterness.
- ☐ Do not confuse boundaries or consequences with punishment.
- ☐ Do not make your obedience dependent upon their repentance.
- ☐ Do not let another person's sin reproduce itself in you.

Which statement above is hardest for me right now - and why?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Which statement have I most often confused with another biblical responsibility?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Final Open Your Bible Review

Return to the major passages without looking back at the teaching first. Answer from Scripture as clearly as you can.

What does Scripture require of me whether or not another person repents?

What responsibilities belong specifically to the person who sinned?

What role does repentance play?

How would I now distinguish forgiveness, trust, reconciliation, and restored access?

Which of those can one person accomplish alone?

What does Scripture forbid me from doing when someone remains unrepentant?

What does Scripture not require me to pretend?

What do David and Saul teach about mercy and distance?

What do Joseph and his brothers teach about discernment and restoration?

How does 2 Corinthians 2 keep accountability from becoming permanent exile?

Where might I have confused grief with bitterness?

Where might I have called fear peace - or vengeance a boundary?

Is there anyone whose repentance I have been trying to accomplish for them?

What part of this situation does Yehovah actually require me to obey in today?

After the Study

Return to your answers from Before You Study. Write what changed, what became clearer, and what still requires prayer and study.

How would I define forgiveness now?

How would I define repentance now?

How would I define reconciliation now?

What is the clearest biblical distinction I learned between forgiveness and trust?

What truth from this study do I most need to practice rather than merely understand?

What do I need to place back into Yehovah's hands?

FINAL REMINDER

We do not overcome evil by pretending it was good. We overcome evil by refusing to let it teach us how to become evil ourselves.

Don't take my word for it - Open your Bible.

Passages Used in This Study

Matthew 3:7-10; Matthew 5:43-48; Matthew 6:9-15; Matthew 18:15-35; Mark 11:25; Luke 17:3-4; Luke 19:1-10; John 2:23-25; Romans 12:9-21; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; Galatians 6:1-5; Ephesians 4:25-32; Colossians 3:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Titus 3:9-11; Genesis 42-45; 1 Samuel 24; 1 Samuel 26; Proverbs 14:15; Proverbs 22:3; Proverbs 27:12; Proverbs 28:13; Psalm 37:1-9; Psalm 55.

Use this Companion with the full Forgiveness, Repentance & Reconciliation Bible Study at OpenYourBible.org. The full study contains the teaching, interpretive cautions, additional questions, and context behind these workbook prompts.

SAFETY RESOURCE

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