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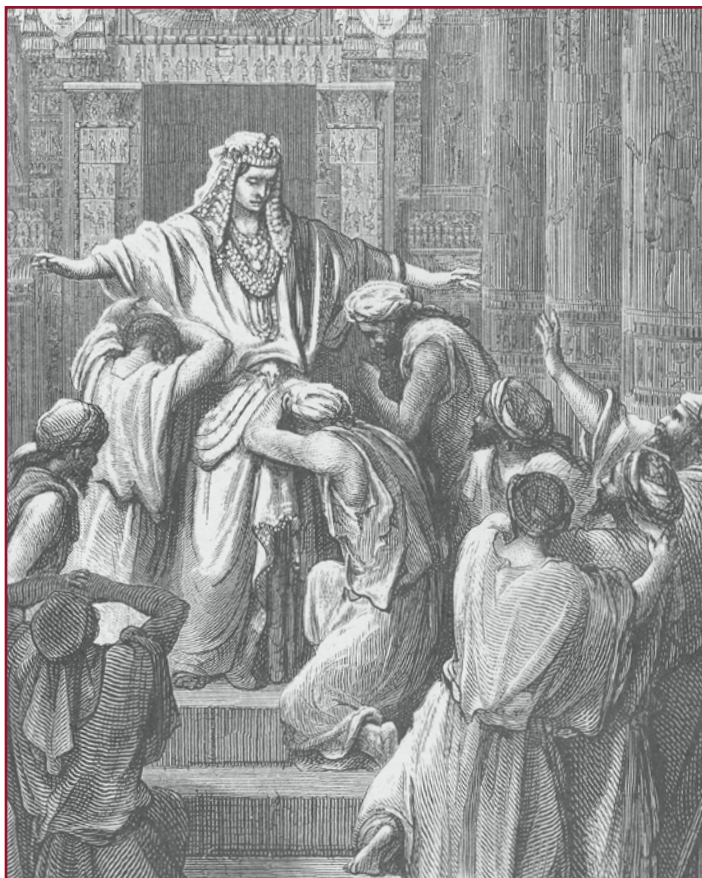
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State Ministry Leader, Iowa*

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Forgiveness



Joseph recognized by his brothers, Gustave Dore (1832-1883), engraving from the Dore Bible, Genesis 50:20

Forgiveness is an indispensable character quality requisite of every legislator, staff member, and lobbyist. Forgiving and gracious people are attractive. Given the competitive and combative environment of lawmaking—especially in an election year where many false things will be said about you—it is easy to end up carrying baggage. The problem is that the baggage is rotten, and it stinks up your whole life! Not only does a lack of forgiveness cloud your relationship with God, but others find it difficult to hang around those who tend to “stench up” the buildings. Accordingly, let’s examine what the Scriptures teach regarding the formulation, strengthening, and enactment of

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

White House Cabinet and Governors: Wednesdays 8am (EST), light breakfast served
Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served
House Members: Thursdays 8am, Natural Resources, Longworth 1334, hot breakfast served

The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.





PUBLIC SERVANT
ENDORSEMENT

Dr. Ben Carson

*Founder & Chairman of
American Cornerstone Institute
Former Secretary of the U.S.
Department of Housing and
Urban Development*



“The work of Capitol Ministries in spreading the Good News is more important than ever. Having enough perspective to realize that people who disagree with you are not automatically your enemies and learning how to treat each other and the constituents of this nation with respect will go a long way toward healing our nation. The work of Capitol Ministries is interwoven into those goals.”

this essential quality: your ability to forgive and forget. After all, is not characteristic forgiveness the way Jesus has dealt with you?

I. THE MANDATE OF FORGIVENESS

What was the inner attitude of Jesus when He underwent the agony of the cross according to Luke 23:34? *But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.*

Compare both the degrees of injustice and the presence of a forgiving attitude that Jesus exhibited in comparison to your reaction to someone who may have wronged you.

In Mark 11:25 what benefit inures to the believer relative to his or her obedience to the mandate to forgive? *“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.”*

According to Romans 12:19, what is the underlying motive for not forgiving someone? *Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord.*

How should we respond to our enemies according to verse 20? *“BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD”* (Romans 12:20).

What does God promise in Romans 12:19–20 when we are faithful to His mandate to forgive?



Paul is most likely referring to an ancient Egyptian custom wherein those who desired to display their contrition in public would carry a pan of burning coals atop their head, outwardly representing the pain of their guilt and shame.

In your own words, write out how Proverbs 25:21–22 asks you to treat someone who has wronged you.

*If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;
For you will heap burning coals on his head,
And the LORD will reward you.*

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him.”
(Romans 12:20).

What was the intent of Jesus’ answer to Peter as recorded by Matthew in 18:21–22? *Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”*

On a scale of one to ten, ten being the most forgiving person, how would you rate the development of this character quality in your life? Why?

Thought question: If your enemy sues you in civil court, our courts demand that you respond. Is an appropriate response to show a lack of forgiveness? Confer with Romans 13:2 in formulating your answer. *Therefore whoever resists authority has*

VERSE OF THE WEEK



Ephesians 4:32

*Be kind to one another,
tenderhearted,
forgiving each other,
just as God in Christ
also has forgiven you.*



Be gracious. Forgive.
Let your grace point
back to the Savior.



MINISTRY UPDATE

Capitol Ministries Launched in El Salvador!

Just across from the President’s administration offices, in a beautiful hall of the Sheraton Hotel, thirty members of Congress, high-ranking state officials, and pastors gathered for something historic and unique in El Salvador—the launch of the Capitol Ministries Bible Study for the executive and legislative branches of government. Instead of political speeches or quotations from state documents, the room was filled with prayer, Bible reading, and testimonies of God’s work around the world.



Ralph and Danielle Drollinger, founders of Capitol Ministries, together with Latin American Director Oscar Zamora and his wife Elizabeth, traveled to San Salvador for the official launch of the national ministry

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opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

II. THE MOTIVES OF FORGIVENESS

Let’s return to Matthew 18:23–33:

“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’”

What is the grand lesson we learn as to why the believer should feel compelled to radically forgive?

The above is summarized in Ephesians 4:32: *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

What are the other two words used in this verse which further characterize a forgiving spirit? Do these words depict you?



Read Colossians 3:12–13: ¹²*So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.*

What additional five motives are revealed in 3:12 that should compel the believer to be characterized by forgiveness? Explain why for each.

What additional characteristic is listed in 3:13 that depicts a forgiving spirit? Explain why.

III. THE MEANS OF FORGIVENESS

One of God’s attributes is that He loves even His enemies. This universal love is displayed in His indiscriminate blessing bestowed on all of mankind, which theologically is referred to as “common grace.” It then follows that for the believer to reflect more and more the attributes of God, he or she must be similarly characterized.

The believer is to grow in forgiveness—a sometimes rigorous discipline he or she must choose. How do you see that fact illustrated in the following passages?

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

“BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD” (Romans 12:20).

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and to participate in meetings with national leaders, pastors, and government officials.



The Speaker of the Congress Ernesto Castro extended a warm invitation for a private meeting with Ralph and Danielle. Deeply moved by Ralph’s testimony, the Speaker responded, “You have my green light to serve our legislators.” Ralph and Oscar then prayed for him and for an open door to begin the Bible study for legislators.

This historic step would not have been possible without Juan Angel Castro, CapMin’s Ministry Leader for El Salvador and pastor of a large church that embraces the biblical mandate of serving those in authority. Pastor Juan explained that while several legislators already attend his church, bringing a Bible study directly into the halls of Congress represents a profound new opportunity.

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Pastor Juan’s church has faithfully held Summer Bible Schools for children across the nation for more than 40 years. In a moving moment, the Speaker of the House recalled attending one of those Bible schools as a child. “I remember you,” he said with a smile, to which Pastor Juan warmly smiled back.



Prior to the official August 28 launch, Oscar Zamora and his wife Elizabeth traveled to San Salvador to prepare the groundwork. They met with Vice President Félix Ulloa, Jr., who affirmed the timeliness of the ministry’s arrival, saying:

“The visit comes at a particularly timely moment, coinciding with the creation of the Secretariat of Values, which will serve as the executive authority on ethical, moral, and spiritual guidance. ... This meeting marks the beginning of a cooperative relationship ... promoting

Continued next page

Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you (Colossians 3:13). (Note the last phrase especially.)

“Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, “God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, and you and your household and all that you have would be impoverished”’ (Genesis 45:5–11).

IV. THE MECHANISM OF FORGIVENESS

A thorough study of biblical forgiveness would not be complete without examining the means by which a sinning believer is restored to the body of Christ. In other words, if a believer is truly living in sin (not just gossiped about or accused), his reassociation is conditioned on his repentance. This principle is borne out in the following passages.

Read Matthew 18:15–20: *“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”*

What is the four-step procedure God has ordained relative to an unrepentant Christian?



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a values-based approach to governance for the well-being of its citizens.”



One of the governors who attended the launch, after hearing Ralph share how Capitol Ministries impacts legislators worldwide, approached Oscar and said: “What you are doing is a noble and honorable work. Next time you are here I want to gather other governors so that they can hear this as well.”

For Ralph Drollinger, this came as no surprise. He has witnessed the same hunger for God’s Word in many nations and often reflects on Jesus’ words in Matthew 9:37: “*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.*” He expressed gratitude for Pastor Juan’s passion to reach and disciple political leaders in his homeland. “We need more leaders like him,” Ralph said, “to step into the harvest field and partner with Capitol

(A side note of importance is worth mentioning here. What is the context of “Where two or three are gathered in my name”? This passage is often quoted out of context as if this is a formula for effective prayer. This passage is not about prayer; it is about discipline.)

Is our association with another believer conditioned on his repentance?

Read all of 1 Corinthians 5:

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.

For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

In an added sense, is it possible to forgive and disassociate simultaneously?

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Ministries in our mission to bring the truth of God’s Word to public servants in every country and city of the world.”



Do you sense a call from God to evangelize, disciple, and teach the Word of God to public servants in your community? Scan the QR code below to learn more.



How do 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14–15 and Galatians 6:1, respectively, add to your conclusions above?

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted (Galatians 6:1).

V. THE MEN OF FORGIVENESS

Read Genesis 37:16–38:

He said, “I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock.” Then the man said, “They have moved from here; for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer! Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, ‘A wild beast devoured him.’ Then let us see what will become of his dreams!” But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, “Let us not take his life.” Reuben further said to them, “Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him”—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father. So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it.

Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him. Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out



of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt.

Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments. He returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?" So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood; and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not." Then he examined it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!" So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.

What did Joseph's brothers do to him?

Review Genesis 45:5–11: *"Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, and you and your household and all that you have would be impoverished.'"*

Read Genesis 50:20 and 22: *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." ... Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.*

What was Joseph's response? During those in-between years, do you think he ever struggled with forgiveness? How strong was he in choosing to forgive?

MINISTRY LEADER PROFILE

Ross Harmon

State Ministry Leader, Iowa



As Capitol Ministries' ministry leader in Iowa, Dr. Ross Harmon is devoted to teaching of God's Word at the state Capitol. In alignment with the mission of Capitol Ministries, he is determined to leave politics to the politicians and focus on drawing leaders in the state Capitol closer to Jesus Christ.

"The idea of mending the soul before mending the state is something that appeals to me," he said. "I think that's such an attainable goal because that's the Holy Spirit's work."

Dr. Harmon successfully completed the required training at the fall 2023 Recruiting and Training Conference in Washington, D.C., and began his ministry to public servants. He is an army veteran and earned a doctorate in Biblical studies from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary where he now teaches an

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Old Testament survey class that provides an overview of Old Testament books. His instruction includes historical context and hermeneutics, the art and science of scriptural interpretation.

Dr. Harmon and wife Nichole raise six children and live in Boone, Iowa. He also teaches at a men's Bible study every week and serves in volunteer ministry roles at his church, Cornerstone Church of Ames.

In his Legislative Bible study, Dr. Harmon is teaching Bible studies Ralph Drollinger has



written during nearly 30 years in ministry specifically to meet the personal and professional faith needs of public servants. The studies cover biblical leadership, faith building, parenting, marriage, governance, taxation, and contemporary issues from a biblical perspective, and more.

“Ralph’s studies are very engaging,” Dr. Harmon said. “I believe it’s important to read Scripture daily, and having a

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Read 1 Samuel 24:1–11:

Now when Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, saying, “Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.” Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. He came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave. The men of David said to him, “Behold, this is the day of which the LORD said to you, ‘Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.’” Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul’s robe secretly. It came about afterward that David’s conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul’s robe. So he said to his men, “Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD’s anointed.” David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And Saul arose, left the cave, and went on his way.

Now afterward David arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, “My lord the king!” And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself. David said to Saul, “Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, ‘Behold, David seeks to harm you’? Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD’s anointed.’ Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it.”

What was David’s response to the injustice Saul brought upon his life?

Read Acts 7:54–60: *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep.*



What was Stephen’s response to those who stoned him?

In 2 Timothy 4:16, what was Paul’s attitude toward those who disappointed him? *At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.*

What was Paul’s thinking pattern that enabled him to gain the strength to forgive according to 2 Timothy 4:17? *But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth.*

What insight does this account provide for us when we are faced with the struggle to forgive someone? Reference Hebrews 13:5–6 in your answer. *Being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,” so that we confidently say, “THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?”*

VI. APPLICATION

Considering these scriptural passages on forgiveness, whom might the Holy Spirit be impressing upon you to forgive completely? What do you plan to do about it? Write out your plan of action.

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study that’s designed with an eye on the Capitol helps legislators put into practice what they are reading in the Word.”

Iowa’s legislative session begins in January and typically runs for 100 to 110 days, depending on the year. Dr. Harmon conducts Bible studies in person during the session, and after the Legislature adjourns, he continues the studies online until in-person meetings resume the following January when the Legislature reconvenes.

Dr. Harmon’s vision is to offer the legislators an environment that does not revolve around legislation. “They will have a community that meets to enrich one another, even out of session,” he said.

As with all CapMin Bible studies, everyone will be welcome, regardless of partisanship.

“I would like to see, as we progress, a focus on the kingdom family and having legislators find common ground in Scripture, even if they are across the aisle,” he said. “The study will build bridges with Scripture as the foundation.”

If you would like to support the ministry efforts Ross Harmon in Iowa, please scan the QR code below to learn more and give.





Making Disciples of Jesus Christ in the Political Arena Throughout the World



Capitol Ministries provides Bible studies, evangelism, and discipleship to political leaders. Founded in 1996, Capitol Ministries has started ongoing ministries in more than forty U.S. state capitols and dozens of foreign federal capitols.

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