

Look at your Story Rope and find a place that feels tender or painful.

1. Ask the Holy Spirit, "Is there someone I need to forgive here?" Name the person/s. (You may also want to refer back to the list you made on page 44.)
2. Ask, "What do I need to forgive _____ for?" Name the wound/offense...what happened?
3. How did you feel when that happened?
4. What was the worst part about what happened?
5. Ask, "God, are there any lies I'm believing about myself, You, or others in relation to this story?" Write what He reveals to you. If you don't already have one, make a lie tag and add it to this place on your rope.
6. Ask, "Jesus, where were you when that happened?" Write what He reveals to you.
7. Ask, "What truth do you want me to know about this situation?" Write what He reveals to you.
8. Imagine yourself taking that person and their actions off your hook like a garment and placing them on God's hook. If imagining is difficult for you, I recommend getting a piece of fabric to represent the person or offense and start with it either on a real coat hook or even just around your neck. Then get another real coat hook and assign it to represent God's hook and place that fabric on the hook. State that you forgive that person/s and name the offense you are forgiving. Ask for God's strength to help you do this. Trust that He will hold them accountable. If you don't feel ready to put them on God's hook, ask Him to show you what you need in order to become ready.
9. Thank God for enabling you to forgive.
10. You were given white ribbons with yellow crosses on them in the bag with the lie tags. Use these forgiveness ribbons to mark the places on your Story Rope where you have forgiven someone.
11. Remember, this may not be a one-time thing. If the pain comes up again, ask God if there is anything else you need to forgive that person/s for and repeat the process as needed. Ask God to show you if there is another person to forgive or another portion of the event that you need to process to gain His perspective.

Day 3: Read Psalm 16:5–6.

In practicing forgiveness, often the other person never repents to us or acknowledges any wrong. They often continue in the same patterns of behavior and will wound again. In these cases, our forgiveness will have to include boundaries as protection for ourselves and so we do not enter into that person's sinfulness.

What are boundaries? In their book aptly entitled ¹*Boundaries*, Cloud and Townsend write:

Boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me. A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership. The concept of boundaries comes from the very nature of God. God defines himself as a distinct, separate being, and He is responsible for Himself. He defines and takes responsibility for His personality by telling us what He thinks, feels, plans, allows, will not allow, likes, and dislikes. . . . He tells us who He is and who He is not. For example, He says that He is love and that He is not darkness (1 John 4:16; 1:6). God also limits what He will allow in His "yard." He confronts sin and allows consequences for behavior. He guards His house and will not allow evil things to go on there.

Setting boundaries does not mean forgiveness hasn't taken place. You can choose to release an offender from being accountable to you for their actions and put them on God's hook, while also separating yourself from a toxic situation.

²Cloud and Townsend continue:

You should not continue to set yourself up for hurt and disappointment. If you have been in an abusive [or toxic] relationship, you should wait until it is safe and until real patterns of change have been demonstrated before you go back. Many people are too quick to trust someone in the name of forgiveness and not make sure that the other is producing "*fruit in keeping with repentance*" (Luke 3:8, NIV). To continue to open yourself up emotionally to an abusive or addicted person without seeing true change is foolish. Forgive, but guard your heart until you see sustained change. . . .

We have been so trained by others on what we "should" do that we think we are being loving when we do things out of compulsion. What we *can* do is set limits on our own exposure to people who are behaving poorly; we can't change them or make them behave right. Our model is God. He does not really "set limits" on people to "make them" behave. But God limits his exposure to evil, unrepentant people, as should we. Scripture is full of admonitions to separate ourselves from people who act in destructive ways (Matthew 18:15–17; 1 Corinthians 5:9–13). We are not being unloving. Separating ourselves protects love, because we are taking a stand against things that destroy love.

¹ Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend, *Boundaries: When to Say Yes How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, 2017), 31, 34, 55.

² *Boundaries*, 38, 44, 45

Read Matthew 18:15–17 and 1 Corinthians 5:9–13.

1. Is there someone currently in your story who is toxic and with whom you need to set some boundaries?
2. Ask the Lord what boundaries with that person should look like (i.e. limiting communication to texts, discontinuing communication altogether, not being alone with the person, etc.). Note what steps He tells you to take.
3. Choose to put that person on God's hook. Forgiveness with boundaries includes letting go of any responsibility you have felt for the other person's actions, reactions, and/or emotions. Those things are within that person's boundaries (what he/she is responsible for), not yours. And they won't like your boundaries, maybe even responding in toxic ways. That's on them. Choose to value what God thinks about your boundaries more than what they think, and place that sense of personal responsibility for them on God's hook with that person.
4. To establish boundaries you must determine what those boundaries are specifically, and then clearly communicate them with the toxic person. Boldly and courageously take the steps the Lord gave you for creating boundaries and note the date that you do.
5. Stand by those boundaries until the Lord releases you to change them! This will bring you great freedom!