

# I Refuse to Stay Bound

## Facilitator Guide and Suggested Answer Key

A companion to the 12 Week Church and Small Group Study

By Bradley Hobbs

### Instructor use

This guide offers suggested response themes and facilitation notes for the student worksheets. It is not a rigid answer sheet. Personal reflection questions may have more than one thoughtful response. Return to the assigned Scripture passages and the book's teaching when guiding discussion.

## Facilitation Principles

1. Keep the focus on personal application. Invite participants to examine their own choices and responses without making the group a forum for accusing absent people.
2. Do not require disclosure. Participants may pass on any question and may keep their written reflections private.
3. Do not equate forgiveness with reconciliation, restored trust, or unrestricted access. Safety and accountability remain important.
4. Read Scripture in context. Ask what the passage says, what it does not say, and how it should be applied responsibly.
5. Handle serious disclosures with care. Follow applicable safeguarding and reporting requirements. Do not promise absolute confidentiality when safety or legal obligations may require action.
6. Use the suggested answers as a teaching compass, not as a test of a participant's spirituality. Growth can be gradual and honest questions are welcome.

### Suggested 60 to 75 minute session

|                           |               |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Opening and check in      | 5–10 minutes  |
| Read Scripture in context | 10 minutes    |
| Teach the week's focus    | 15–20 minutes |

|                                        |               |
|----------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Discuss worksheet prompts</b>       | 15–20 minutes |
| <b>Personal application and prayer</b> | 10–15 minutes |

# The Decision to Walk in Freedom

**Assigned reading:** Introduction and Chapters 1–2

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:23–24; John 8:31–32

## Teaching aim

Begin with willingness, humility, and an honest examination of the heart.

## Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** What does walking in spiritual freedom mean to you?

**Suggested direction:** Look for an answer grounded in Scripture, honest self examination, and a practical step rather than a claim that pain can simply be ignored.

**Prompt 2:** How can you acknowledge that harm occurred while still inviting God to shape your response?

**Suggested direction:** Look for an answer grounded in Scripture, honest self examination, and a practical step rather than a claim that pain can simply be ignored.

**Prompt 3:** What is one area where you want truth to guide your next step?

**Suggested direction:** Look for an answer grounded in Scripture, honest self examination, and a practical step rather than a claim that pain can simply be ignored.

## Facilitator notes

Help participants define freedom as a continuing walk in truth, not pretending pain never happened. Invite honest self examination without blaming a person for harm done to them. No one needs to share a personal story.

## Suggested personal application

Write one private, practical step you can take this week to seek truth and spiritual freedom.

## Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

## Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

# Recognizing Offense

**Assigned reading:** Chapters 3–4

**Scripture:** Proverbs 18:19; Hebrews 12:14–15

## Teaching aim

Notice how hurt and offense can influence thoughts, words, decisions, and relationships.

## Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** What is the difference between wise confidentiality and silence that protects wrongdoing?

**Suggested direction:** Encourage distinctions between truth telling, gossip, accountability, and resentment. Invite concrete examples without naming people.

**Prompt 2:** How can resentment affect a person's choices over time?

**Suggested direction:** Encourage distinctions between truth telling, gossip, accountability, and resentment. Invite concrete examples without naming people.

**Prompt 3:** What response can help you address hurt without allowing it to govern your life?

**Suggested direction:** Encourage distinctions between truth telling, gossip, accountability, and resentment. Invite concrete examples without naming people.

## Facilitator notes

Emphasize that speaking truth responsibly is not the same as gossip. Bitterness is addressed through honest reflection, spiritual care, and wise action, not through shame or pressure.

## Suggested personal application

Notice one response pattern in yourself this week. Record what happened, how you responded, and what a wiser response could look like.

## Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

## Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

# Examining the Heart

**Assigned reading:** Chapters 5–6

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:10; James 1:19–20

## Teaching aim

Invite correction and distinguish self examination from condemnation.

## Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** Why can forgiveness feel difficult even when someone sincerely wants to obey God?

**Suggested direction:** Help the group distinguish an honest struggle from a refusal to grow. Do not shame participants for emotions or grief.

**Prompt 2:** How is releasing personal vengeance different from saying that wrongdoing does not matter?

**Suggested direction:** Help the group distinguish an honest struggle from a refusal to grow. Do not shame participants for emotions or grief.

**Prompt 3:** What attitude or response might you need to bring honestly before Jesus?

**Suggested direction:** Help the group distinguish an honest struggle from a refusal to grow. Do not shame participants for emotions or grief.

## Facilitator notes

Allow grief and difficulty to be acknowledged. Do not present forgiveness as instant emotional relief or as the removal of consequences. Encourage participants to seek trusted support when needed.

## Suggested personal application

Write a prayer asking for help with one specific response or attitude. Keep this reflection private if you prefer.

## Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

## Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

# The Weight of Bitterness

**Assigned reading:** Chapters 7–8

**Scripture:** Ephesians 4:31–32; Hebrews 12:15

## Teaching aim

Consider how resentment can take root and how people can choose not to repeat harmful patterns.

## Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** What does meaningful repentance look like beyond words?

**Suggested direction:** Keep accountability focused on a person's own conduct. Harm suffered does not become the victim's fault.

**Prompt 2:** How can someone take responsibility for their own conduct without accepting blame for another person's wrongdoing?

**Suggested direction:** Keep accountability focused on a person's own conduct. Harm suffered does not become the victim's fault.

**Prompt 3:** What can help interrupt a harmful pattern before it is passed to someone else?

**Suggested direction:** Keep accountability focused on a person's own conduct. Harm suffered does not become the victim's fault.

## Facilitator notes

Keep responsibility clear. A wounded person is not responsible for the harm inflicted on them, but each person can be invited to consider their own choices and how they treat others.

## Suggested personal application

Identify one pattern you want to stop repeating and one positive action you can practice instead.

## Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

## Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

# Choosing Forgiveness

**Assigned reading:** Chapters 9–10

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:14–15; Colossians 3:12–13

## Teaching aim

Study forgiveness as a deliberate response to Jesus, not denial of wrongdoing.

## Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** How would you explain the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?

**Suggested direction:** Reinforce that forgiveness does not automatically restore access, trust, or a relationship. Boundaries can be wise and loving.

**Prompt 2:** Why might a boundary be necessary even when a person is pursuing forgiveness?

**Suggested direction:** Reinforce that forgiveness does not automatically restore access, trust, or a relationship. Boundaries can be wise and loving.

**Prompt 3:** What is one next step you can take without pretending trust has already been restored?

**Suggested direction:** Reinforce that forgiveness does not automatically restore access, trust, or a relationship. Boundaries can be wise and loving.

## Facilitator notes

Do not pressure anyone to restore contact or trust. Forgiveness does not require tolerating ongoing harm. Safety, accountability, and wise boundaries remain important.

## Suggested personal application

Write a personal prayer about the next honest step toward forgiveness, wisdom, and peace.

## Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

## Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

# Forgiveness, Repentance, and Accountability

**Assigned reading:** Chapters 11–12

**Scripture:** Luke 17:3–4; 2 Corinthians 7:9–11

## Teaching aim

Explore the relationship between mercy, changed conduct, responsibility, and truth.

## Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** What can make an apology credible over time?

**Suggested direction:** Look for observable responsibility and changed behavior rather than words alone. Spiritual authority does not remove accountability.

**Prompt 2:** How can spiritual language be misused to control people or avoid accountability?

**Suggested direction:** Look for observable responsibility and changed behavior rather than words alone. Spiritual authority does not remove accountability.

**Prompt 3:** Where might you need to take responsibility for your own actions?

**Suggested direction:** Look for observable responsibility and changed behavior rather than words alone. Spiritual authority does not remove accountability.

## Facilitator notes

Distinguish a spoken apology from sustained change. Encourage appropriate reporting and outside support where abuse, threats, exploitation, or serious misconduct are involved.

## Suggested personal application

List two observable signs of changed conduct that can help rebuild trust responsibly.

## Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

## Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

# Forgiveness and Reconciliation

**Assigned reading:** Chapters 13–14

**Scripture:** Romans 12:18; Matthew 5:23–24

## Teaching aim

Recognize that forgiveness and reconciliation are related but not identical.

## Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** Why does reconciliation require participation from more than one person?

**Suggested direction:** Reconciliation requires mutual participation and may not be safe or possible in every circumstance.

**Prompt 2:** What can help trust grow through consistent character and wise discernment?

**Suggested direction:** Reconciliation requires mutual participation and may not be safe or possible in every circumstance.

**Prompt 3:** Which part of a difficult relationship is within your responsibility, and which part is not yours to control?

**Suggested direction:** Reconciliation requires mutual participation and may not be safe or possible in every circumstance.

## Facilitator notes

Avoid promising that every relationship can or should return to its former condition. Reconciliation requires truth, willingness, accountability, and attention to safety.

## Suggested personal application

Write down one realistic step within your control and one outcome you must leave outside your control.

## Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

## Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

# Trust, Wisdom, and Boundaries

**Assigned reading:** Chapters 15–16

**Scripture:** Proverbs 4:23; Proverbs 22:3

## Teaching aim

Consider how forgiveness can coexist with discernment, safety, and appropriate boundaries.

## Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** What is the difference between a wise boundary and an attempt to punish someone?

**Suggested direction:** Invite boundaries that protect safety and dignity without being framed as revenge or control.

**Prompt 2:** How can painful memories be acknowledged without allowing them to define every present decision?

**Suggested direction:** Invite boundaries that protect safety and dignity without being framed as revenge or control.

**Prompt 3:** What support or boundary could help protect your peace and well being?

**Suggested direction:** Invite boundaries that protect safety and dignity without being framed as revenge or control.

## Facilitator notes

Do not equate trust with blind access. Encourage appropriate professional, pastoral, or community support when the situation calls for it.

## Suggested personal application

Write one boundary, support step, or healthy routine you may want to establish.

## Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

## Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

## Responding Without Retaliation

**Assigned reading:** Chapters 17–18

**Scripture:** Romans 12:17–21; 1 Peter 3:9

### Teaching aim

Resist revenge and allow Scripture to guide a faithful response to conflict.

### Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** What is within your control when another person refuses to change?

**Suggested direction:** Distinguish releasing revenge from giving up protective, legal, or accountability steps.

**Prompt 2:** What painful conclusions can betrayal cause people to believe about themselves?

**Suggested direction:** Distinguish releasing revenge from giving up protective, legal, or accountability steps.

**Prompt 3:** How can you respond firmly and truthfully without seeking revenge?

**Suggested direction:** Distinguish releasing revenge from giving up protective, legal, or accountability steps.

### Facilitator notes

Releasing revenge does not mean giving up lawful options, safety measures, or accountability. Help participants distinguish retaliation from protective action.

### Suggested personal application

Plan a calm, truthful, and responsible response to one challenge. Consider whether you need support before acting.

### Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

### Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

# Walking in Truth and Spiritual Freedom

**Assigned reading:** Chapters 19–21

**Scripture:** John 8:31–36; Galatians 5:1

## Teaching aim

Connect freedom in Jesus Christ with continued obedience to His Word.

## Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** How can forgiveness and justice work alongside one another?

**Suggested direction:** Encourage Scripture in context and practical obedience without using a verse to silence pain or excuse wrongdoing.

**Prompt 2:** How might unresolved hurt influence communication and relationships?

**Suggested direction:** Encourage Scripture in context and practical obedience without using a verse to silence pain or excuse wrongdoing.

**Prompt 3:** Which truth from Scripture can guide your response when emotions become strong?

**Suggested direction:** Encourage Scripture in context and practical obedience without using a verse to silence pain or excuse wrongdoing.

## Facilitator notes

Keep the discussion grounded in the context of Scripture. Avoid using verses to silence grief or prevent appropriate questions about wrongdoing.

## Suggested personal application

Choose one Scripture reference from this session and write how you intend to put its principle into practice.

## Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

## Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

# Living Out What You Have Learned

**Assigned reading:** Chapters 22–24

**Scripture:** Ephesians 4:15; James 1:22–25

## Teaching aim

Apply the study to daily choices, communication, relationships, and spiritual maturity.

## Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** How can you distinguish conviction that leads to growth from shame that attacks your worth?

**Suggested direction:** Distinguish growth oriented conviction from shame and support responsible, truthful communication.

**Prompt 2:** When might speaking truth be necessary, and how can it be done responsibly?

**Suggested direction:** Distinguish growth oriented conviction from shame and support responsible, truthful communication.

**Prompt 3:** How can you continue healing when others do not understand your choices?

**Suggested direction:** Distinguish growth oriented conviction from shame and support responsible, truthful communication.

## Facilitator notes

Do not require participants to disclose details about painful experiences. Reinforce truthfulness, fairness, wise counsel, and the dignity of each person.

## Suggested personal application

Identify one truth you need to speak, one action you need to take, or one expectation you need to release.

## Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

## Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

# Continuing in Freedom

**Assigned reading:** Chapters 25–27

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:13–14; 2 Corinthians 3:17

## Teaching aim

Review the course and prepare for continued personal application.

## Suggested answer themes

**Prompt 1:** What truth has challenged or encouraged you most during the study?

**Suggested direction:** Look for realistic continuing practices, support, and willingness to keep growing rather than claims of instant perfection.

**Prompt 2:** What have you learned about forgiveness, responsibility, boundaries, and spiritual freedom?

**Suggested direction:** Look for realistic continuing practices, support, and willingness to keep growing rather than claims of instant perfection.

**Prompt 3:** What practices will help you continue growing after the group ends?

**Suggested direction:** Look for realistic continuing practices, support, and willingness to keep growing rather than claims of instant perfection.

## Facilitator notes

Celebrate growth without asking for public testimony. Completion should not require disclosure of trauma or a claim that every struggle is resolved.

## Suggested personal application

Create a simple plan for prayer, Scripture reading, trusted accountability, and continued growth.

## Questions to ask if discussion stalls

What does the Scripture passage actually say? What part of this principle is within our responsibility? What would a wise and safe next step look like in everyday life?

## Before closing

Invite participants to write privately, pray if they wish, and choose one practical next step. Do not ask anyone to share a personal reflection unless they volunteer.

# Course Completion Guide

Invite participants to review their worksheets and identify what they want to continue practicing. A meaningful outcome is not that every painful situation is resolved, but that participants have engaged Scripture, considered their own choices, and identified wise next steps.

## Suggested completion questions

- What truth has challenged you most?
- What have you learned about forgiveness and accountability?
- What is one practice you intend to continue?
- What support may help you keep growing?

## Instructor preparation checklist

- Read the assigned chapters and Scripture passages in advance.
- Prepare the room and printed worksheets.
- Remind the group that sharing is voluntary.
- Review any relevant safeguarding or reporting responsibilities.
- Allow time for prayer and personal application.

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