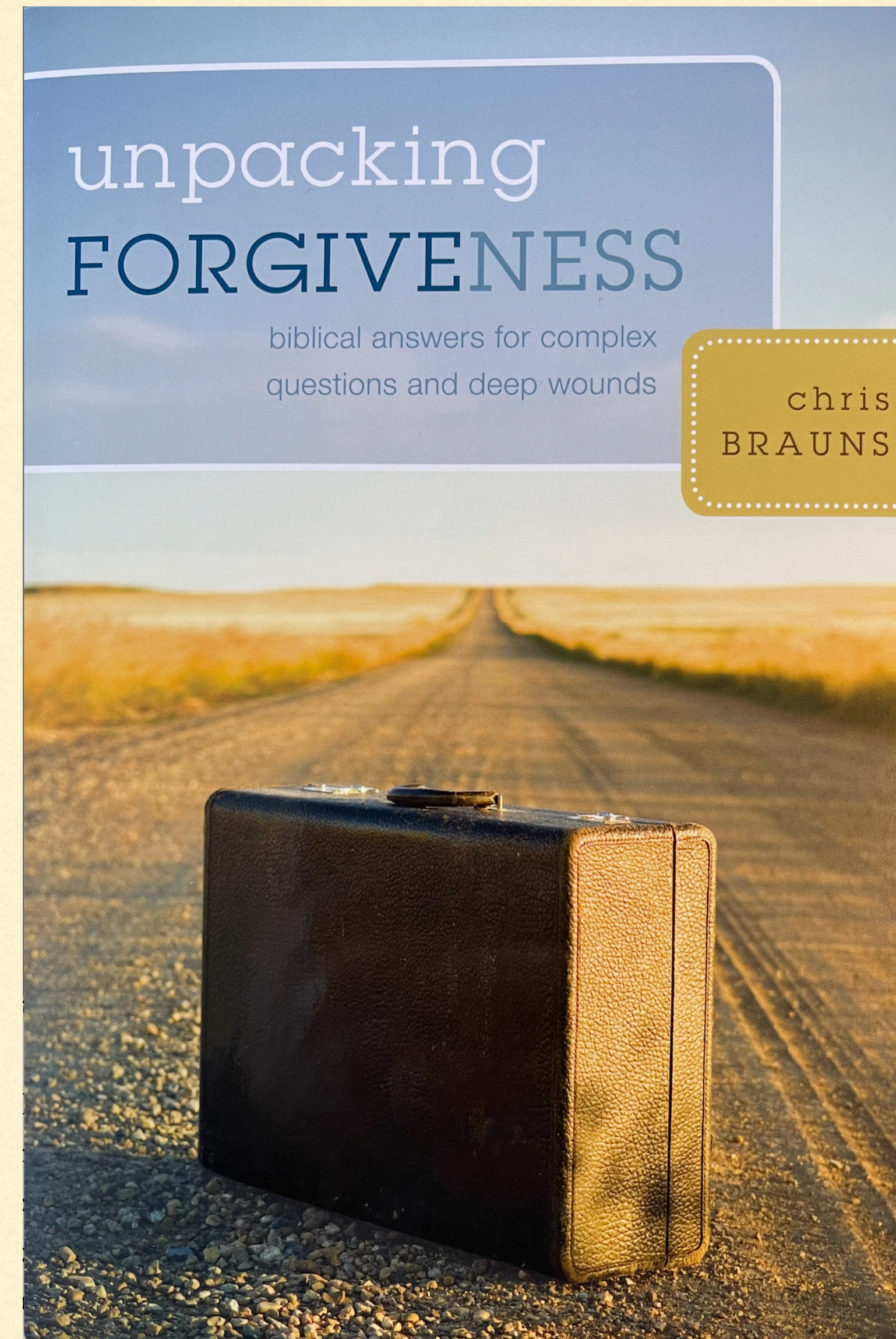


Start the morning “unpacking forgiveness”!

No name necessary on a 3x5 card, but ...

jot a ***simple* definition of forgiveness** on a 3X5 card and turn it in.

(No cheating and looking on the Internet. Give a simple definition).





UNPACKING FORGIVENESS AT SAYLORVILLE CHURCH

Pastor Chris Brauns (<http://chrisbrauns.com/>) The Red Brick Church, Stillman Valley, IL



Note: when referencing the street “Keosauqua Way” in Des Moines, please do not abbreviate this as “Keo Way.”

Hear now the Word of Christ, even
as we pray Psalm 119:18!

*Open my eyes, that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law. Psalm
119:18*

And forgive us our debts, **as** we also have
forgiven our debtors. . . . For if you forgive
others their trespasses, your heavenly
Father will also forgive you, but if you do
not forgive others their trespasses, neither
will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:12, 14-15, emphasis added

Our overall goal this morning is to apply the gospel (the good news about Jesus) to how we understand and live out interpersonal forgiveness.

APPLY THE GOSPEL TO FORGIVENESS: 4 PARTS

- **Motivate** you (& the people you influence) to unpack forgiveness.
 - **Compare forgiveness definitions & identify two current forgiveness barriers** featured by our culture.
 - **Survey** via unpacking forgiveness on a page why **theology / doctrine** matters for unpacking forgiveness
 - Respond to **questions and answers.**
-

We will make a PDF version of the slides available. So don't feel pressure to write everything down.

What's your favorite
passage for sharing or
summarizing the gospel?

We must be very sensitive where forgiveness discussions are concerned.

Consider the kinds of hurts and pain people face. . . .

Many people, including
Christians, *fear*
unpacking forgiveness.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

POP QUIZ: TRUE OR FALSE?

- It is appropriate for local churches to publicly forgive grave offenses not committed against them or anyone in their church.
 - A person can be forgiven by God and still go to hell.
 - It is a legitimate strategy to forgive people whether they have actually done anything wrong to me.
 - One of the most important people for me to forgive is myself.
-

POP QUIZ: TRUE OR FALSE?

- I can forgive someone but not be open to the possibility of *any* kind of relationship with the person.
 - It is acceptable for Christians to forgive God.
 - Versions of the above are taught by one evangelical or another.
-

What is the most
charitable explanation for
the vastly different views
about forgiveness?

The reason people —
including Christian authors
— differ so energetically
about forgiveness is because
they define forgiveness in
very different ways.

And forgiveness is a gospel word.
How we define forgiveness goes to
the heart of our understanding of
how we understand salvation and
how we relate to others in a fallen
world.

GOSPEL CENTERED FORGIVENESS

“A commitment by the offended to pardon graciously the repentant from moral liability and to be reconciled to that person, although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated.”

GOSPEL CENTERED FORGIVENESS

- Always proactively and graciously show love.
 - If the other person repents, forgive them, though forgiveness does not mean the elimination of consequences.
 - Never harbor bitterness nor take revenge.
 - Leave final justice to God who judges justly.
-

Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

Luke 17:3-4

Across the last 40 years, a new understanding of forgiveness has developed that is most often referred to as “Therapeutic Forgiveness.”

Therapeutic forgiveness has “prevailed.”

Most Christians therapeutically define forgiveness.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE THERAPEUTIC

In the aftermath of Sigmund Freud and other secular thinkers, personal, psychological well-being is increasingly — predominantly— understood as the primary purpose of life.

Rather than people seeing themselves as accountable to God or some other external standard, in a therapeutic age the primary objective is the internal well-being of individuals.

At the heart of liberty is the right to
define one's own concept of existence,
of meaning, of the universe, and of the
mystery of human life.

Justice Kennedy
Planned Parenthood v. Casey

What my wife and I have taught our daughters right from the beginning, that their sense of self-worth, their sense of value, their sense of what they want to do with their life comes not from the outside, but comes from within. . . .

We need to be a party and a people that makes sure that our women in this country understand anything they can dream, anything that they want to aspire to, they can do.

Governor Chris Christie

So, how is the therapeutic
worldview applied to an
understanding of the
forgiveness?

THERAPEUTIC FORGIVENESS

A individual or private act where the offended determines to no longer harbor feelings of bitterness or resentment regarding an offense or perceived offense.

THERAPEUTIC FORGIVENESS

When you forgive someone for hurting you, you perform spiritual surgery inside your soul; you cut away the wrong that was done to you so that you can see your “enemy” through magic eyes that can heal your soul. Detach that person from the hurt and let it go, the way a child opens his hands and lets a trapped butterfly go free.

Lewis Smedes

L.TERKEURST ON FORGIVENESS

(IN HER #1 BESTSELLER)

There's an amazing person I want to make sure you don't miss meeting . . . the one and only glorious you that you look at each day in the mirror. . . . Hello, beautiful, beautiful you.(70)

There is a healed version of me that is waiting and wanting to emerge. (101)

TerKeurst focuses on her experiences with counselors even as she encourages readers to look within and review their experiences: “collect the dots” of our past, “connect the dots,” and “correct the dots.” (75-104)

If we become more self-aware of how we are processing our thoughts and perceptions and redirect those in more life-giving ways, then inside every loss, a more wise, empathetic, understanding, discerning, compassionate person of strength and humility has the potential to arise within us.(84)

TerKeurst, Lysa. *Forgiving What You Can't Forget: Discover How to Move On, Make Peace with Painful Memories, and Create a Life That's Beautiful Again*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2020.

Therapeutic Forgiveness

F is a feeling — ceasing to feel resentment or bitterness.

F is private: an activity within individual hearts and minds.”

F is unconditional. F should be granted regardless of whether or not the offender repents.

Gospel Centered Forgiveness

F is a commitment to pardon the offender.

F is something that happens between two parties.

F is conditioned upon repentance.

<i>Therapeutic Forgiveness</i>	<i>Gospel Centered Forgiveness</i>
<i>F is motivated primarily by self interest. F others for your own sake. According to Smedes, “Every soul has a right to be free from hate, and we claim our rightful inheritance when we F people who hurt us unfairly, even if their intentions were pure.”</i>	<i>F is motivated by love for neighbor and love for God. It is for God’s glory and our joy.</i>
<i>A standard of justice is not critical—it is about how the person “feels.” According to this definition, you can legitimately choose to F someone who has not done anything wrong.</i>	<i>Justice is the basis for F. You cannot legitimately F someone if he or she has not done anything wrong according to God’s standards.</i>
<i>F can happen apart from reconciliation.</i>	<i>F is inextricably connected to reconciliation, though boundaries may be appropriate.</i>

PROBLEMS WITH UNCONDITIONAL /THERAPEUTIC FORGIVENESS

- Builds Bitterness
- Implies and Leads to Universalism
- Compromises the Testimony of the Church
- Fails to Point to the Cross
- Removes the Urgency of Reconciliation

See *Others on Conditional Forgiveness*

“LAYERED FORGIVENESS” - (TIM KELLER)

To forgive is:

- 1.First, to name the trespass truthfully as wrong and punishable, rather than merely excusing it.
- 2.Second, it is to identify with the perpetrator as a fellow sinner rather than thinking how different from you he or she is. It is to will their good.
- 3.Third, it is to release the wrong doer from liability by absorbing the debt oneself rather than seeking revenge and paying them back.
- 4.Finally, it is to aim for reconciliation rather than breaking off the relationship forever. If you omit any of these four actions, you are not engaging in real forgiveness.”

From Keller's, *Forgive*, pages 9-10, Brauns emphasis and breakdown into points. Likewise, Keller does not formally use the title “Layered Forgiveness.”

Keller's is a biblical
definition and we can be
so thankful Keller is calling
out both therapeutic
forgiveness and the victim/
cancel culture. But . . .

THE DIMENSIONS OF CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS

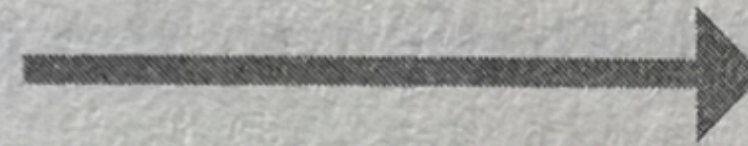
VERTICAL (or "Upward")

God



Divine forgiveness offered

(If you repent and receive
God's forgiveness > New identity)



HORIZONTAL (or "Outward")

(If the wrongdoer repents and receives
your forgiveness > New relationship)

INTERNAL (or "Inward")

You

(If you internally forgive, you can
seek reconciliation and justice)

Human forgiveness offered

Others

Keller, Timothy. *Forgive: Why Should I and How Can I?* New York: Viking, 2022. Page 11.

3 “PUSHBACKS” TO LAYERED FORGIVENESS

1. Telling victims to internally pay the cost of the offense may not be either biblical or effective. (2 Tim 4:14-16, Psalm 73, 2 Thess 1:3-10).
2. We should not be reluctant to talk about the wrath or judgment of God where grave offenses and unrepentant offenders are concerned. A soft view of God's judgment makes for hard and bitter people (Romans 12:17-21).
3. Teaching unconditional and automatic forgiveness far too easily implies universalism (the idea that God automatically forgives).

“As for balance and the difficult situation of grave offenses and unrepentant offenders, perhaps Keller’s book gives this writer a needed push. In my book *Unpacking Forgiveness* (Crossway, 2008), consistent with the position argued by a number of other theologians, I emphasized that forgiveness is conditional. I argued that Christians ought always to have an attitude of forgiveness – that is, we should always offer the gift of forgiveness -- but that forgiveness takes place only when the offender is repentant. I remain persuaded of that position. But it is not lost on me that some might weaponize an incomplete and distorted understanding of the conditional nature of forgiveness as a license for harboring bitterness and resentment and taking revenge if only in small ways. Perhaps in that regard Keller’s work warns those who would weaponize conditional forgiveness.”

Unpacking Forgiveness on a Page

Motivate to unpack – Chapter 2 “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.” Unpacking forgiveness is not only the right thing, it’s also the best thing. Jesus’s yoke is easy and his burden is light.

The Cross – Chapters (3–5) Christ died as the substitute for those who believe (Isa 53:5). The first principle of forgiveness is that we forgive others as God forgave us (Matt 6:14–15; Eph 4:32).

Providence – God works all things together for good for his people (Rom 8:28). We are not victims. See Joseph narrative (Gen 45:5–7, 50:19–20)!

Eternal Punishment – If we maintain an orthodox view of hell, we know: (a) We can’t refuse to forgive. (b) God is just. We don’t need to worry that people simply get away with sin (Rom 12:19; 2 Tim 4:14–15; Rev 6:10).

The Church – Forgiveness must be unpacked in Christian community, both in terms of Matt 18, but also be processed there as we work through the various complexities of life together, see for instance that Paul addressed the book of Philemon to the whole church.

From the Beginning, Be:

1. *Committed* to learning from the Bible & using a biblical definition.
2. *Gracious*: whatever someone has done to offend you pales in comparison to what you have done to offend God.
3. *Humble*: Chapter 6 – The way up is down.
4. *Just*: Chapter 12 – God does not ignore injustice.
5. *Urgent and motivated*: Chapter 7 – If you do not act biblically, many will suffer! See also Matt 18:5–7.

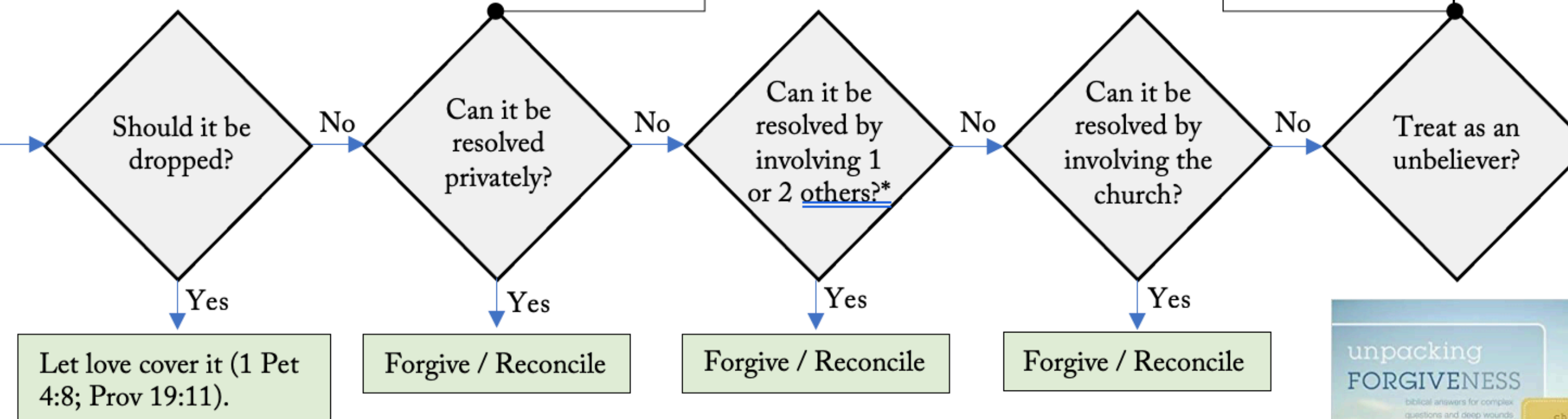
Chapters 11–12 – *If the person is unrepentant of a serious offense* (Rom 12:17–20):

1. Determine not to take revenge.
2. Offer grace and love.
3. Leave room for the wrath of God.

Chapters 6–10
Matt 18:15–17

Then ask (Chapter 8)

1. Have I examined myself?
2. Am I right?
3. Is there a pattern?
4. Have I sought wise counsel?
5. What is going on in the other person’s world?



Chapters 13–14 – Beat bitterness by trusting in God’s justice and resting in his providence.

*Chapter 15 – If it is a “*Christian Impasse*,” then agree to disagree and move forward for Christ—independently if necessary (Acts 15:36–41)

