



CORNER FRINGE MINISTRIES

FREEDOM IN MESSIAH*Leader Guide | Week 9 | The Debt Release Worksheet***The Bitter Water at Marah****01 SESSION OVERVIEW***A leaders snapshot for meeting night*

Theme	Forgiveness & Release
Core Focus	Remaining tethered to the past through unforgiveness — the one imprisoned is not the offender but the offended
Exodus	Exodus 15:23–25 — Israel bitter toward Moses at Marah. Moses brings the bitterness to God rather than feeding it. The tree thrown in, the water made sweet.
New Testament	Matthew 18:21–22 — Peter asked how many times to forgive. Yeshua said seventy times seven — stop counting. Forgive completely.
Memory Anchor	<i>"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Messiah also has forgiven you." — Ephesians 4:32 (LSB)</i>

SESSION TIMING		
Welcome & Open	5 min	<i>Cameras on, welcome people, frame the evening</i>
Teaching Video	9–11 min	<i>Play the recorded lesson — give relevant context</i>
Breakout Groups	60 min	<i>Student Guide drives the session (Breakout Tool secondary)</i>
Main Room Recap	15–20 min	<i>Groups share, leader guides discussion</i>
Close & Prayer	5 min	<i>Use the Memory Anchor, send with purpose</i>

WHAT THIS MEETING IS REALLY ABOUT

This week is the emotional peak of the curriculum for many people. Nine weeks of building trust, naming strongholds, renouncing lies, and standing in truth — and now the hardest ask of all: release the person who hurt you. The Marah passage enters this week from a specific angle that is distinct from Week 8. Last week was about the accuser's voice and God's response to condemnation. This week is about human bitterness toward another person — Israel bitter toward Moses — and what it looks like to bring that bitterness to God rather than feeding it. Moses did not grumble back. He cried out to God. That is the model. Your job tonight is to hold the grief and the anger without rushing to the forgiveness instruction. People need to feel that the wound is acknowledged before they can consider releasing it.

02 LEADER SELF-CHECK*Think about this ahead of time*

You cannot lead people into territory you have been unwilling to enter yourself. Take five minutes alone with these questions in preparation for meeting night.

Sometime before the first meeting, honestly contemplate these questions:

1. Is there someone in my own life I have not fully forgiven — someone whose actions still have real estate in my present? Have I brought that honestly to God before leading others through this session?
2. Have I confused forgiveness with reconciliation in my own thinking — and am I clear enough on the distinction to hold it for someone else tonight?
3. Am I prepared to hold space for significant pain tonight without rushing to the forgiveness instruction? Can I let the grief be present before pointing to the remedy?
4. Is there anyone in this group I already know has a heavy forgiveness burden — and have I prayed specifically for them by name?
5. Do I genuinely believe forgiveness is possible for the hardest cases — not just the easy ones?

WHY THIS MATTERS

A leader who has not done their own work will unconsciously steer the group away from the places they themselves have avoided. You do not have to be perfect or fully healed to lead this group. But you do have to be honest — with yourself and also with God. If you feel unsettled about any of the questions above, please spend some more time with additional preparation and prayer.

03 BEFORE AND DURING THE SESSION*Reference the Week 1 Leader Guide for more detail*

A well-prepared leader creates a well-prepared room. Please review the Week 1 Leader Guide for a reminder of how to prepare.

Prayer Focus This Week

- Pray for the person in your group carrying the heaviest wound. You may not know who it is. Ask God to meet them specifically tonight — not to force forgiveness before they are ready, but to begin the work of softening what has become hardened.
- Pray for the group's ability to hold each other's pain without rushing to fix it. Forgiveness is a journey and some people are at the very beginning. Ask the Spirit to make the room safe enough for that beginning.
- Pray for Moses-like leadership in yourself tonight — not to argue back, not to defend, not to hurry the process. To bring what arises to God and trust Him with the transformation.

A Note On Framing

- This week asks people to consider one of the hardest things a person can do. Do not announce that before the video — let the teaching do it. What you can do is create a sense that whatever arises tonight is safe here. The tone you set in the opening five minutes shapes everything that follows.

Pastoral Notes (What this session tends to surface):

Week 9 is the emotional peak of the curriculum for many people. Here is what to be prepared for:

- **The Marah Angle — Distinct from Week 8:** Week 8 used Marah to illustrate God's response to the accuser's condemnation. This week enters Marah from a completely different angle — Israel's human bitterness toward Moses, and Moses' model of bringing that bitterness to God rather than feeding it. If anyone in your group notices the same passage appearing, this distinction is the explanation.
- **The Forgiveness vs. Reconciliation Distinction:** This distinction is worth reinforcing more than once tonight. Many people who have resisted forgiveness have actually been resisting what they thought forgiveness required — contact, relationship, pretending nothing happened. When the distinction lands — forgiveness needs one person, reconciliation needs two — it often opens a door that has been locked for years.
- **The Person Who Returns to the Same Offense Repeatedly:** Some people in your group may have forgiven the same offense multiple times — made a decision, felt relief, and then found the anger returning days later. Normalize this clearly. The return of the feeling does not undo the decision. Forgiveness is often a decision that must be renewed. That is not failure — that is the nature of deep wounds.
- **What Moses Models:** The key move of this week is Moses bringing the bitterness to God rather than managing it himself or arguing back at the people accusing him. That pattern — bring it to God, not feed it — is the practical takeaway. Help people name specifically what bringing it to God looks like for them, not just the concept.

LEADER DEVELOPMENT | HOLDING GRIEF WITHOUT FIXING IT

This week you will encounter genuine grief — grief over what was done, grief over what was lost, grief over what forgiveness will cost. The leadership skill is to hold that grief with the person rather than immediately moving to resolution. A premature move to the forgiveness instruction — before the grief has been fully witnessed — can feel dismissive; as though the wound didn't really matter. Let the grief be present first. Your willingness to stay in the grief before moving to the truth is what makes the truth land rather than bounce.

A WORD FOR YOU

This week you held space for some of the heaviest things people carry. That is not easy work and it is not without cost. If you are carrying something from tonight's session — something that moved you, something that is sitting with you — that is part of the calling. Leaders are not observers. You are in the story too. Bring what you are carrying to God. If you need to talk it through, call Mike. You cannot pour from empty. Take care of yourself this week. Nine weeks down. Three remain. What you are building in this community is real.

04 DURING THE BREAKOUT

How to observe, analyze, and respond as a shepherd

WATCH FOR LISTEN FOR RESPOND WITH	
Anger surfacing	This week may produce more anger than any previous week. A person confronting unforgiveness often feels the weight of it freshly when asked to consider releasing it. Receive the anger without alarm — it is a sign the wound is real. Do not rush to the forgiveness instruction before the grief has been witnessed.
Confusing forgiveness with reconciliation	This is the most common misunderstanding. If someone says 'I can't forgive because it would mean pretending it didn't happen' — gently clarify: forgiveness does not require reconciliation. Reconciliation needs two willing parties. Forgiveness needs only one. Make that distinction clearly.

Someone disclosing current harm	If someone is currently being harmed — an abusive situation that is ongoing — do not apply the forgiveness framework to a safety situation. The immediate priority is safety. Stay present, do not leave them alone after the session, and contact Mike the same evening.
Bitterness toward God surfacing	Sometimes what surfaces is not bitterness toward a person but toward God — for what He allowed or did not prevent. Receive it carefully without alarm. Acknowledge the grief is real. Do not try to resolve the theology in the session. Bring it to Mike.
Person ready to forgive	Occasionally someone arrives at a genuine decision to forgive during the session. Do not rush past it. Let the group witness it. The Step 2 declaration in the Student Guide is designed for this moment — invite them to read it aloud if they are willing. Receive it with reverence, not enthusiasm.
One person dominating	Forgiveness is a topic people feel strongly about. Watch for the person whose story takes over the room. Address it privately after the session. The writing-before-speaking structure is the tool — if they are skipping the writing, that is the specific pattern to address.

Week 9 surfaces some of the most significant pastoral moments in the curriculum. Here is how to handle the most common. Use this framework for the situations most likely to arise this week:

When someone is not ready to forgive and says so:

- Do not apply the forgiveness framework. The immediate priority is safety.
- Stay present. Do not leave the person without follow-up the same evening.
- Contact Mike immediately.

When what is shared involves current harm or an abusive situation:

- Name what you are observing gently: I notice you keep returning to this. The accuser does not want you to receive what God has already declared.
- Point to Romans 8:1 specifically and personally: This verse is for you, right now, about this specific thing.
- Follow up privately. Persistent self-condemnation can be a sign of something that needs more than one session.

When bitterness toward God surfaces:

- Receive it without alarm. The grief is real.
- Do not attempt to resolve the theology in the session.
- Bring it to Mike — this conversation needs more than one session.

ON THE DOMINANT VOICE — A CONSISTENT REMINDER

The person who dominates is rarely doing it maliciously. But their volume creates quiet for everyone else — and in that quiet, the people who most need to speak stay silent. Address it privately after the session, never in front of the group. The Student Guide structure — writing before speaking at every step — is the tool. If the dominant voice is skipping the writing, that is the specific pattern to address.

05 GUIDING THE RETURN, CLOSING THE SESSION, AND BETWEEN SESSIONS

Reference the Week 1 Leader Guide for more detail

Please refer to the Week 1 Leader Guide for the proper tips and procedures on what to think about and do relative to the return, closing the session, and what to do in-between sessions. Don't forget

that the Week 1 Leader Guide also explains when difficult moments require escalation and how to refer to Pastor Mike. Please reference it when needed.

This is a high follow-up week. Here is what to do:

- Follow up personally with anyone who named something heavy — particularly abuse history or a significant ongoing wound. They need to hear from you within 24 hours.
- Contact Mike promptly with anything that involves current harm or significant pastoral complexity. Do not wait until next session.
- Pray specifically for each person in your group and what they named tonight. By name. With what you know about where they are.
- Do the Week 10 personal reflection before the next session.

ENCOURAGING WITHOUT ENABLING

Healthy encouragement honors honesty and points toward the next step. Enabling stops at the wound and goes no further — over time it teaches people that their story is their identity, which is exactly the lie this curriculum is breaking. When in doubt: affirm the honesty, point to the Memory Anchor, let the Word do the work.

Thank you again for your service to Corner Fringe Ministries and the Kingdom of God!