

Everyday Courage, Part 3: By The Slice

Andy Stanley · Matthew 7:3-5

AT A GLANCE

Andy Stanley argues that many of us stay stuck in unforgiveness not because the other person's fault isn't real, but because we won't admit our own. Blame lets us hide from ourselves. Drawing on Jesus's teaching about the speck and the plank, he names owning our slice of responsibility as an act of everyday courage that alone makes forgiveness possible.

- Blame shields us from an uncomfortable truth: the other person's fault, however large, rarely accounts for one hundred percent of what happened.
- You cannot forgive someone and move on until you own your part; misplaced blame keeps someone accountable for what is actually yours.
- Jesus reorders the sequence: deal with your own plank first, not because their speck doesn't matter, but because clarity starts with you.

“Given enough time, there's always a way to sneak ourselves a little slice of the blame pie.”

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

[Matthew 7:3-5](#) — “Why do you notice the small piece of dust that is in your friend’s eye, but you don’t notice the big piece of wood that is in your own? Why do you say to your friend, ‘Let me take that piece of dust out of your eye’? Look at yourself first! You still have that big piece of wood in your own eye. You are a hypocrite! First, take the wood out of your own eye. Then you will see clearly to get the dust out of your friend’s eye.” (ERV)

The argument

Forgiveness itself is an act of courage — not merely an act of grace

Building on the prior week, Andy Stanley frames forgiveness as courageous because it gives an offender something undeserved. He puts it plainly: 'Forgiveness is giving somebody something they don't deserve that they haven't earned... you're giving them a gift even though they have taken from you.' He calls it 'catalytic' — capable of setting something in motion beyond your

own life, into the lives of the people you love. But he ends the recap by naming the wall many hit: some have tried everything they know about forgiveness and still can't let go, still circle back to the same rehearsed grievance. That stuck place is where this week's message begins.

Insight — Forgiveness is not sentimentality but a costly, courageous transfer of what is owed.

Blame protects us from an uncomfortable truth about ourselves

Andy Stanley's central move is naming why we cling to blame: 'We blame because blame shields us from the truth about us because their part was so much bigger than ours and they are so much more guilty than us.' Holding someone fully accountable, he says, is often a way of avoiding the harder task of being angry with and disappointed in ourselves. He is careful, though, to draw a clear boundary: 'If you were hurt or taken advantage of as a child, this does not apply to you. You were not at fault. You were and you are innocent.' The teaching is for the everyday friction of adult relationships, not for those genuinely victimized without agency.

Insight — Blame often survives not because it's accurate but because it's comfortable — it lets us avoid a verdict on ourselves.

The speck and the plank: Jesus diagnoses selective sight

Andy Stanley walks through Jesus's question — 'Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own?' — as a direct confrontation of our instinct to fixate on someone else's fault while ignoring our own. He notes our reflexive defense: 'It's not a speck... She lied to me. They abandoned me.' The size of their wrong, he argues, becomes the excuse for refusing to look at our own contribution. His summary line frames the stakes: 'Refusing to see what is actually there to see is a recipe for compounding resentment' — the resentment that seems to grow with every new relationship, job, or marriage.

Insight — Fixating on the size of someone else's wrong is often what keeps us from seeing our own.

Jesus's reordering: deal with yourself first — the 'hypocrite' charge as an act of love

Andy Stanley leans into the harshness of Jesus calling us hypocrites — not as condemnation but as confrontation born of love: 'the reason he's harsh is the same reason your parents were harsh from time to time — because they loved you.' The hypocrisy is that we demand the other person own their part while refusing to own ours. Jesus's remedy reorders the sequence rather than dismissing their fault: 'First, take the plank out of your own eye... and then you will see clearly.' Andy Stanley presses this into a set of self-examining questions — 'Did I play a role in this? Did I choose not to see what I didn't want to see?' — as the courageous alternative to rehearsed innocence.

Insight — Clarity about someone else's wrong is only available on the far side of honesty about your own.

Owning your part feels like losing but is actually liberating

Andy Stanley names directly why this is frightening rather than merely difficult: 'the moment you transfer part of the blame from them, even a slice of the blame from them to you, it weakens your case against them. And that feels like losing.' We've already lost so much, he says, that surrendering any of the blame feels like one loss too many. But he insists the opposite is true — 'it is liberating' — because owning your part is what lets you forgive yourself first, which is what finally frees you to forgive them. He ties this to Jesus's words: 'you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.'

Insight — What feels like conceding ground in an argument can be the very thing that sets you free from it.

Cross-references

- [John 8:32](#) — used to frame owning your role in a hurt as the truth that finally sets you free

DEVOTIONAL

There is a pie we all bake without meaning to, and its name is blame. We cut it carefully, giving ourselves the smallest possible slice, and hand the rest across the table as if the arithmetic could never be questioned. It tastes sweet for a while — the sweetness of being right, of being the one who was wronged. But something in us knows the slice we kept is too small, and the knowing sits like a stone we've learned to walk around. Jesus does not deny the plank-sized wrongs done to us. He simply asks a harder question than the one we're used to asking: what is lodged in your own eye? Not instead of theirs — first. Before the speech we've rehearsed a hundred times in the shower, before the story we tell so well it has calluses, there is a mirror, and it is asking to be looked into. The mirror is not cruel. It is the only place clarity has ever lived. To stand there and ask, honestly, whether we saw what we didn't want to see, whether we stayed when we should have walked, whether our silence was cowardice dressed as patience — this is not self-punishment. It is the doorway out of the resentment that has been quietly compounding, relationship after relationship, for years. And on the other side of that doorway is not defeat but freedom — the freedom to forgive, because we have first forgiven ourselves; the freedom to set down a grievance we've been carrying so long we mistook its weight for our own.

Reflection

- Where in your life have you rehearsed a story of pure innocence — and what might it cost you to ask whether that story is entirely true?
- Is there a person you're struggling to forgive, and what small, honest slice of responsibility might be yours to own before you can let it go?

- What outcome are you more afraid of — admitting your part, or continuing to carry the resentment that comes from refusing to?

Closing prayer

Heavenly Father, give us the wisdom to hear what we needed to hear today, beyond my words. Give us the courage to ask: is there something in my eyes, something I don't want to see, that I need to see? I can only imagine what would happen in our families if we started with ourselves before we went after the people around us. And for the one carrying deep hurt from the past, things they had no control over, give them eyes and ears to see and hear what they need. Give us courage to see what's there, and then courage to act — not waiting for fear to disappear, but doing what you've called us to do. In Jesus' name, amen.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

You can't forgive someone and move on until you own your part — even a slice of it changes everything.

This week

This week, before you rehearse your grievance again, sit with Matthew 7:3-5 and pray honestly: 'Heavenly Father, do I have a plank? Is there something I haven't wanted to see?' Write down whatever comes, without defending yourself.

Return to [Matthew 7:3-5](#)