

STUDY GUIDE

HOW TO



LOVING PRICKLY
PEOPLE WELL

 **the water's edge**
CHURCH



**Porcupines aren't unlovable,
they just require a little extra care
to get past the spikes.**

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WEEK 1 The Prickly Truth

Warm Up

1. If you had quills that popped up when you were annoyed, what daily situation or pet peeve would make them shoot up the fastest?
2. What's one thing that makes your 'quills' instantly lay flat and puts you in a good mood no matter what?



Watch
Weekly Video

Porcupine Wisdom

Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today."

Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"

Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."

Digging Deeper

1. Put yourself in the shoes of the crowd. If someone who had cheated and hurt you for years was suddenly singled out by Jesus for honor and friendship, how would you react, and why?
2. Out of all the people in the crowd, why do you think Jesus chose to eat with Zacchaeus?
3. What do you think caused Zacchaeus' dramatic shift from greedy and selfish to generous and repentant?

Quill Questions

1. Who are the “porcupines” in your life—people who are difficult to be around (without naming anyone here)? What behaviors or attitudes make them seem prickly to you?
2. Porcupines raise their quills when threatened to appear larger and more intimidating. What causes people to “raise their quills”?
3. Read James 4:1-3. How does this passage explain why people lash out or create conflict?
4. Think of someone “prickly” in your life. How might seeing their quills as a defense mechanism and reaction to fear change how you relate to them?
5. How can we seek to understand the “story behind the spikes” and better understand the pain or fear driving someone's behavior?
6. Porcupines live a solitary life because their quills prevent closeness with others. How do our quills prevent intimacy with others?
7. What causes you to raise your quills and act prickly towards others?
8. What helps you lower your quills and feel safe enough to be open and vulnerable with others?
9. What are some specific ways you can communicate safety to someone who seems prickly or guarded?
10. What does empathy look like when dealing with someone who is prickly?

Hug Your Porcupine

Fill this out individually, then share your plans with your House Church, friend, or spouse.

Name your Porcupine for this week. Write down a name (or code name) for someone you plan to seek to understand better this week.

This week, I will seek to understand the story behind their spikes by:

This week, I will intentionally try to lower their quills by:

Write a short prayer for your porcupine:



WEEK 2 Responding to Quills

Warm Up

1. Share a time this week when you felt “poked” by someone’s quills—through harsh words, passive-aggressive actions, or being excluded. How did you respond?
2. When someone’s quills poke you, do you usually respond by fighting back, withdrawing (flight), or freezing up?



Watch
Weekly Video

Porcupine Wisdom

Luke 6:27-36

“But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back. Do to others as you would like them to do to you.

“If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.

“Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.”

Digging Deeper

1. A slap on the cheek was more about insult than injury. By “offer the other cheek,” Jesus isn’t saying, “accept abuse.” He’s saying, “refuse to respond in the same way.” What does it look like for us to offer the other cheek?
2. By “offer your shirt,” Jesus was teaching us to respond to mistreatment with unexpected grace. Surprise them by reacting with love, not retaliation. What does it look like for us to offer our shirt, too?
3. Why is it so important to Jesus that we love our enemies?

Quill Questions

1. Share a time when someone poked you and you responded in a Christ-like way. What helped you do that?
2. Which part of Jesus’ teaching in Luke 6 is the hardest for you to live out?
3. Have you ever prayed for an enemy or prickly person in your life? What was that experience like? How did it impact you?
4. How does responding to quills with grace affect the prickly person?
5. How can we create space to calm down and think clearly before responding to pokes?
6. Jesus’ well-known phrase “Do to others as you would like them to do to you” specifically refers to how we should treat our enemies. How do you want others to respond when you poke them?
7. When have you seen calm, grace, or kindness disarm someone’s defensiveness or prickliness?
8. What is a practical way you can “bless those who curse you”?

We must never be surprised that we find ourselves in conflict with those we are called to love. It is in loving them that we most resemble Christ.

Hug Your Porcupine

Fill this out individually, then share your plans with your House Church, friend, or spouse.

Name your Porcupine for this week. Write down a name (or code name) for someone who has been prickly or poking you lately.

This week, when I feel poked, I will remain calm by:

This week, I will choose grace and kindness by:

Write a short prayer for your porcupine:



WEEK 3

Hold Me...But Not Too Tight

Warm Up

1. Share about a time when you said “yes” to something but later realized you should have said “no.”
2. How do you understand boundaries? Why are they important in relationships?



Watch
Weekly Video

Porcupine Wisdom

Mark 1:35-38

Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. Later, Simon and the others went out to find him. When they found him, they said, “Everyone is looking for you.”

But Jesus replied, “We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too. That is why I came.”

Digging Deeper

1. Why wouldn't Jesus be constantly available and help as many people as possible?
2. How would you respond if you were Jesus and the disciples told you, “Everyone is looking for you”?
3. When the disciples tried to cross one of Jesus' boundaries, He explained His purpose. How do boundaries help us better fulfill our purpose?

More Porcupine Wisdom

Luke 12:13-14

Someone called from the crowd, “Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me.”

Jesus replied, “Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?”

Digging Even Deeper

1. What boundary is Jesus establishing in this conversation? Why?
2. How might setting this kind of boundary be a loving act toward others and ourselves?

Quill Questions

1. Who is someone you know with healthy and loving boundaries? What does this look like in their life?
2. What is the hardest part of setting boundaries for you? (Fear of conflict, rejection, people-pleasing, need for validation, lack of intentionality, etc.)
3. How can we distinguish between selfishness and self-care?
4. What happens in relationships when boundaries are unclear or ignored?
5. How can boundaries help us love people better?
6. Share an example of a boundary you currently use or hope to start that helps you love people better.
7. How does God guide us in choosing which requests for our time and energy to accept or decline?
8. In what areas of your life are you currently overcommitted? What boundaries will help you be less overcommitted?
9. What boundaries do you need with “porcupines” in your life so you can still love them well without burning out?

**Boundaries define what is me
and what is not me.**

Hug Your Porcupine

Fill this out individually, then share your plans with your House Church, friend, or spouse.

Name your Porcupine for this week. Write down a name (or code name) for someone you need to establish a loving boundary with.

This week, I will show love while keeping healthy boundaries by:

If I struggle maintaining my boundary, I will:

Write a short prayer for your porcupine:



WEEK 4 Recovering from Pokes

Warm Up

1. When someone has hurt you, what's your first instinct—pull away, fight back, or try to make peace? Why do you think that's your go-to reaction?
2. When someone apologizes, what do you need to hear or see before you can forgive them?

Porcupine Wisdom

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"

"Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt.

"But the man fell down before his master and begged him, 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.' Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.



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Weekly Video

"But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment.

"His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it,' he pleaded. But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

"When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.

"That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."

Digging Deeper

1. What is Jesus teaching Peter when He says to forgive “seventy times seven”?
2. What made the king so upset with the servant’s lack of forgiveness?

Quill Questions

1. If you poked someone, how would you ask for forgiveness?
What would you do or say?
2. What does it mean to “forgive from the heart,” and how is that different from just saying “I forgive you”?
3. How can you grow towards genuine forgiveness when it’s hard to forgive?
4. How does remembering the debt God forgave you help you forgive others?
5. What does it look like for us to forgive like Jesus?
6. Why do you think it is so important to God that we are good at forgiveness?
7. How can you protect yourself from bitterness when the person who hurt you doesn’t apologize or change?
8. Share a time when a relationship was restored after a major injury. How did reconciliation happen?
9. Is there someone you are trying to forgive now? What is making it hard? How could you grow towards genuine forgiveness?

**When you release another,
you release yourself.**

Hug Your Porcupine

Fill this out individually, then share your plans with your House Church, friend, or spouse.

Name your Porcupine for this week. Write down a name (or code name) of someone you need to forgive—or someone you've said you've forgiven but it is still bothering you.

This week, I will take one step toward forgiveness or reconciliation by:

If I struggle to forgive, I will turn to God for help by:

Write a short prayer for your porcupine:



WEEK 5 Snuggle Strategy

Warm Up

1. Share a time when gentleness helped you get closer to someone with their “quills” up.
2. Who in your life has loved you even when you were prickly?
How did they show it?



Watch
Weekly Video

Porcupine Wisdom

Romans 12:9-21

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,
*"I will take revenge;
I will pay them back,"*
says the Lord.

Instead,

*"If your enemies are hungry,
feed them. If they are thirsty,
give them something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap
burning coals of shame on
their heads."*

Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

Digging Deeper

1. Grab a pen and draw a rectangle around each time you read “Don’t” and “Never” in the passage. Then draw a circle around each time you read “Do” and “Always”. How would you summarize Paul’s list of Dos and Don’ts? What does this teach us about how to hug a porcupine?
2. What does this passage teach us about revenge? Why is this difficult to live out?
3. Do you think responding with good can actually “conquer evil”? How?

Quill Questions

1. Which line in this scripture is most challenging for you to live out with the “porcupines” in your life?
2. Paul says, “Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them.” What’s the difference between sincere and insincere love? How can we grow towards sincerely loving our porcupines?
3. What does it look like to “take delight in honoring each other”?
4. Paul urges, “Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.” What does it look like to pursue peace on your end, even if the other person doesn’t respond the same way?
5. How can we keep our hearts soft and cuddly instead of cold and spiky when we deal with a “porcupine” repeatedly?
6. What are some ways you’ve shown love to difficult people in your life in the past? How did that work out?
7. Paul tells us to “bless those who persecute you.” What’s one practical way you could do that this week?
8. Who in your life has seemed prickly or unhuggable lately? What is one way you could employ Paul’s Snuggle Strategy this week?

**A Christlike life repays
hatred with humility,
not hostility.**

Hug Your Porcupine

Fill this out individually, then share your plans with your House Church, friend, or spouse.

Name your Porcupine for this week. Write down a name (or code name) for someone you plan to love better this week.

This week, I will intentionally and sincerely love my porcupine by:

This week, I will seek to reach beyond their quills by:

Write a short prayer for your porcupine:





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