

### **News Story Summary**

On June 14, 2015, Phillip Robinson, a pastor at New Vision Baptist Church, Murfreesboro, TN, shared a story with his church, with the help of a friend, Ron Hammer. It was an unlikely story of murder, bitterness, and ultimately, forgiveness and friendship.

In November of 1986, Phillip's father, Wayne Robinson, left his store to go to the bank and was shot and killed in front of the store by two men. One of them was Ron Hammer. As you can imagine, Phillip suffered great agony over the loss of his father; he also experienced hatred for his killers.

Many years later, Ron Hammer reached out to the Robinson family in confession and repentance. Phillip responded and offered forgiveness. Phillip indicated that the birth of his granddaughter on the anniversary of his father's death was instrumental in helping him to understand that God was redeeming the story. Last fall, Phillip and his mother supported Hammer at his parole hearing, and Hammer was ultimately paroled in March of this year. Two months later, Phillip traveled to Ron's home where the two embraced and later prayed together.

Hammer said, "The forgiveness the Robinsons gave me changed my whole life. Even after I gave my life to God, I never forgave myself...Forgiveness and love are so powerful."

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the phrase "Pastor befriends man who murdered his dad.")

### **Focus Attention**

Relay the story about Phillip Robinson and Ron Hammer. Explain that, from the world's standpoint, Pastor Robinson had every reason to hate Ron Hammer and to refuse him forgiveness. Ask: Why do you think he chose to forgive and to love? What actions do you suppose Pastor Robinson took during his journey toward forgiveness and love? Point out that sometimes love is not a feeling, rather, it is a choice. Challenge the group to look for what John had to say about love and forgiveness as they study today.

### **Challenge**

Remind the group of the forgiveness offered by Phillip Robinson to Ron Hammer. Call for the group to silently identify any person or people in their lives who are difficult to love. Challenge them to consider how they can act on the truths discovered in today's study and show God's love to this person or group of people.