

Essential: God's Forgiveness

Study Guide for Small Group Discussion and Personal Application Lynn
Haven UMC – August 2, 2020 – Pastor Craig Carter

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As our regathering and rebuilding process as a church continues over the summer, we are discussing what is essential to our existence as a congregation. This week we consider how **God's forgiveness** is essential for life.

Discussion Starters:

⇒ What does it mean to forgive someone? We use the word *forgive* often, but what does forgiveness look like in practice?

⇒ Have you ever needed to ask someone for their forgiveness for something you had done? How would you describe that process, your emotions, and the results?

Sin is a problem we all wrestle with. In Colossians 3 we read of the damaging effects of personal sin – things like sexual immorality, lust, and greed. We also read how other sinful behaviors – things like anger, rage, and slander – threaten Christian community. It is clear that there is no room for sin in Christians' lives or in the church. What are we to do about the sin in our lives? We are to take steps to lessen our exposure to sin, to confess sin and change our behavior, and we must also embrace forgiveness.

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. (Colossians 3:12-15 NLT)

1) It is essential that we receive God's forgiveness.

Recognize that everyone has sinned.

Everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. (Romans 3:23 NLT)
Against you [O God], and you alone, have I sinned... (Psalm 51:4 NLT)

Recognize that God offers forgiveness to everyone.

God made [us] alive with Christ, for He forgave all our sins. (Colossians 2:13b NLT)

If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9 NIV)

The church needs to be a place where people are loved and accepted just as they are. That does not mean we ignore sin; it means we allow God to work in people's hearts. The church must also be a place where honesty and transparency prevail. It is beneficial to others when we share our own shortcomings and failures and let them know how God has changed us.

2) It is essential that we share God's forgiveness.

As we have received forgiveness from God, our gracious response is to forgive others.

Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. (Colossians 3:13 NLT)

[Jesus] himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins – and not only our sins but the sins of all the world. (1 John 2:2 NLT)

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." (Matthew 6:12 KJV)

People are not perfect, everyone makes mistakes. The way we keep relationships healthy is by being liberal with forgiveness. We can choose to let offenses go.

"You will be able to forgive if you have had the grace of feeling forgiven. Only the person who feels forgiven is capable of forgiving." (Pope Francis)

Application Questions:

⇒ Are there things you need to be forgiven for that God has brought to mind today? Confess them, embrace the forgiveness God offers, and ask Him to help you live differently.

⇒ Are there people who have offended you that you need to forgive? Confess to the Lord that you have been holding on to that offense, ask Him to help you forgive and to show you what you can do to set that relationship right.

⇒ What would it look like if you had a small group or community where honesty and transparency were normal? Could you be brave and share with your group what has been challenging for you? Do you need to join a group or deepen an accountability relationship?