



Discussion Guide

Date: 2/1/2026

Sermon Title: Am I forgiven?

Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious and Merciful God, clothe us today with your compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Quiet the voices of shame, fear, and self-condemnation within us, and open our hearts to receive the fullness of your forgiveness in Jesus Christ. By your Spirit, help us to listen deeply, speak honestly, and be transformed by the peace of Christ that rules in our hearts. We pray this in the name of the One who forgives and makes all things new. Amen.

Opening Question:

1. Share a time when someone forgave you for something. How did that make you feel? How did it change your relationship with that person?

Series theme:

Forgiveness is one of the most essential practices of the Christian faith yet one of the hardest to live out. We struggle to ask for it. We resist offering it. And often, we quietly wonder if it truly applies to us. This week, we begin by answering a deeply personal and holy question: Am I forgiven? Through Christ, we are invited to experience the profound depths of God's grace, mercy, and restoring love.

Getting stated:

1. When you hear the word "forgiveness," what emotions or experiences immediately come to mind
2. Why do you think forgiveness; especially believing we are forgiven; can feel so difficult?
3. Have you ever struggled with the question, "Am I really forgiven?" What fuels that doubt?

Digging into the Word:

Read Colossians 3:12-17 (NRSV). You may choose to read it twice, allowing a brief moment of silence after each reading. If you're in a group have members read from different translations like The Message or ESV.

1. Paul begins by naming who we already are: "God's chosen ones, holy and beloved." How does starting with identity (not behavior) shape how we understand forgiveness?
2. What changes when forgiveness is received as a gift, not something earned?
3. Verse 13 says: "*Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*" Why is it often easier to accept God's forgiveness in theory than in practice?

4. How does receiving God's forgiveness empower us to forgive others?
5. Verse 15 invites us to let "the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." What competes with the peace of Christ when we struggle to believe we are forgiven?
6. How does unresolved guilt or shame affect our spiritual and emotional health?
7. Paul connects forgiveness to worship, gratitude, and daily life. How does believing "I am forgiven" change the way we pray, sing, serve, or relate to others?
8. What practices help you stay rooted in grace rather than shame? Share spiritual practices such as prayer, solitude, confession, etc. . . Why or how do they help? Are there other practices you would like to cultivate?

Other scriptures to consider:

Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:7; Psalm 103:10–12; Matthew 18:21–35; 2 Corinthians 5:17–19; 1 John 1:9

Sermon Questions:

1. Pastor Clayton opens the sermon describing a woman who sat in church for decades hearing about forgiveness but never believed it was for her. What prevents us from accepting that God's forgiveness is personally meant for us?
2. Henry Nouwen said, "the hardest person to forgive is yourself". Do you agree with this statement? Why do you think self-forgiveness is often more difficult than forgiving others?
3. The sermon emphasizes that God meets us with mercy rather than condemnation. How might our churches and communities look different if we prioritized mercy over condemnation in our interactions?
4. Pastor Clayton mentions people who grew up being told how bad they were versus hearing about God's grace. How does the emphasis we choose affect our spiritual growth and relationship with God?
5. Pastor Clayton said, "I think the world needs more mercy and less condemnation." Where do you see condemnation prevalent in our culture today? How can the church be different?
6. "Forgiven people become forgiving people," said Pastor Clayton. We are called to forgive others and offer the same mercy. Whom in your life do you need to offer forgiveness? What changes would your life take on if you lived as a forgiven person?
7. This week we celebrate the Eucharist, Holy Communion in worship. How does participating in communion as a forgiven person prepare us for the hard work of forgiving others in our daily lives?

Applying it:

1. What are some things that make it difficult for people to forgive themselves, even after confessing to God? Is there an area of your life where you struggle to accept God's forgiveness?
2. How can we as a community emphasize God's mercy and grace while still acknowledging the reality of sin?
3. What does it mean practically to be a forgiven person who becomes a forgiving person? Can you share an example from your own life?
4. What might it look like this week to receive forgiveness rather than striving for approval?
5. How can this group help one another live more fully as forgiven and forgiving people?



CLOSING PRAYER

God of Grace and New Beginnings, we thank you that your mercy is deeper than our sin and your love stronger than our shame. Help us to leave this space clothed in compassion, rooted in peace, and grounded in gratitude. Teach us to live as people who know they are forgiven; free to forgive, quick to love, and eager to bear your grace into the world. We trust your promise that "the best of all is, God is with us." Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WAYS TO RESPOND

Choose one or more of the following practices this week.

1. Each morning this week, look in the mirror and say aloud: "In the name of Jesus Christ, I am forgiven." Journal about how this practice affects you.
2. Make a list of things you've struggled to forgive yourself for. Bring each one to God in prayer, specifically accepting God's forgiveness for that item.
3. Memorize Colossians 3:13 - "As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." Reflect on it throughout the day.
4. The next time you participate in Communion or say the Lord's Prayer, pause at the forgiveness portions and make them intensely personal.