



## Sermon Discussion Questions

July 21, 2024

*“The Power ...”*

# THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Mark 11:25

1. **Opening Discussion Questions:** This week’s Discussion Guide will be a little different – starting with the “Opening Discussion.” Below are a dozen quotations about this week’s topic from church leaders and theologians of the past. If you are using this handout in a group, select a few and discuss what they say to you. If doing individual study, select a couple and write a few sentences describing what the quotation means to you. Which one would you want to place on your refrigerator or mirror as a daily reminder?
  - a. *“I can forgive, but I cannot forget,” is only another way of saying, “I cannot forgive.”* Henry Ward Beecher
  - b. *“He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself; for every man has need to be forgiven.”* Thomas Fuller
  - c. *“In these days of guilt complexes, perhaps the most glorious word in the English language is ‘forgiveness’.”* Billy Graham
  - d. *“The only true forgiveness is that which is offered and extended even before the offender has apologized and sought it.”* Søren Kierkegaard
  - e. *“If God forgives us, we must forgive ourselves. Otherwise it is almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than him.”* C. S. Lewis
  - f. *“The man who is truly forgiven and knows it, is a man who forgives.”* Martyn Lloyd-Jones
  - g. *“Our forgiving of others will not procure forgiveness for ourselves, but our not forgiving of others proves that we ourselves are not forgiven.”* John Owen
  - h. *“If then we entreat the Lord that He would forgive us, we also ought to forgive: for we are before the eyes of our Lord and God, and we must all stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, and each man must give an account of himself.”* Polycarp
  - i. *“You are nothing better than deceitful hypocrites if you harbor in your minds a single unforgiving thought. There are some sins which may be in the heart, and yet you may be saved. But you cannot be saved unless you are forgiving. If we do not choose to forgive, we choose to be damned.”* Charles Spurgeon
  - j. *“Only one petition in the Lord’s Prayer has any condition attached to it: it is the petition for forgiveness.”* William Temple
  - k. *“It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.”* Mother Teresa
  - l. *“We need not climb up into heaven to see whether our sins are forgiven; let us look into our hearts, and see if we can forgive others. If we can, we need not doubt but God has forgiven us.”* Thomas Watson
2. **Sermon Outline/Key Points**
  - a. Jesus Requires You to Forgive Others
    - i. Jesus is very clear that forgiveness is required for Christians

- ii. Don't make excuses for unforgiveness
- b. Jesus Empowers You to Forgive Others
  - i. Jesus is the only lasting source of power to forgive
  - ii. Jesus empowers us to forgive like He does
- c. Jesus Frees You When You Forgive Others
  - i. Unforgiveness is a spiritual trap for Christians
  - ii. You are blessed and freed when you choose forgiveness

### 3. Study/Discussion Points:

#### a. *Sunday Afternoon*

- i. The Bible says a great deal about forgiveness – both God's provision for forgiving us and our forgiving of others. Both are essential. Starting tomorrow you will be asked to read several passages dealing with forgiveness. If you have not accepted Christ as your Savior pay particular attention to those talking about God forgiving our sins. You will be given some verses that provide us with examples of forgiveness at work.
- ii. But for today, as soon as possible after listening to the sermon set aside some private time to consider who you need to forgive and seek the Holy Spirit's strength to do so.

#### b. *Monday*

- i. Read Romans 3:23, Colossians 2:13-14, and Ephesians 2:1-10
  - 1. Is it our outward behavior or our inward nature that leads us to need God's forgiveness?
  - 2. What are the three aspects of God's nature that contribute to His forgiveness (see Ephesians 2:4-5)?
  - 3. When God created man in His image, He shared these three characteristics (called communicable attributes) with us. How do you think each contributes to forgiving others?
  - 4. Based on Ephesians 2:8-9 what would you respond to a person that says she/he believes they will go to heaven because they have lived a basically good life? What is required instead?
- ii. One of the great examples of forgiveness recorded in the Bible is the well-known story of Joseph found in Genesis 37- 50. If you don't have time for the entire 14 chapters just read Genesis 37:17-28, 45:3-15, and 50:15-21.
  - 1. Did Joseph wait for his brothers to ask forgiveness before he gave it?
  - 2. Based on the final passage, do you think that there is any possibility that Joseph forgot what his brothers had done to him? Did that knowledge affect the validity of his forgiveness?
  - 3. What truths can we learn from Joseph's story that should be applied to our lives?

*c. Tuesday*

- i. Read Romans 3:9-12, James 3:1-2 & 5:15-16, and 1 John 1:8-2:6.
  1. According to John, how do some Christians deceive themselves?
  2. Why does John say that he is writing “so that you may not sin” when he has just said we sin?
  3. What is the necessary and appropriate response when we, as Christians, sin? Why should it be to “one another” and not just to God? How do Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 6:15, and Ephesians 4:25 help us understand the principles involved?
  4. What would you say to a person who says, “It doesn’t matter how I live because God will forgive me”? To the person who says, “I’ve sinned too deeply for God to forgive me”?
- ii. Sometimes you hear people say, “I couldn’t possibly forgive him/her after what he/she did to me” Read these two examples of forgiveness: Luke 23:34 and Acts 7:60.
  1. How does Jesus’ command in Matthew 5:44 relate to these two events? Do you think it is truly possible to pray for someone who you refuse to forgive?
  2. How do you think 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 2:10, and Colossians 2:6 relate to our willingness to forgive others?

*d. Wednesday*

- i. Read Matthew 18:21-35, Luke 17:3-4, Leviticus 19:17, Galatians 6:1-2, James 5:19-20 and Matthew 18:15-20
  1. What details about Peter’s question catch your attention? What did he not ask Jesus about forgiving his brother that we would probably have asked? What limits does Peter seem to place on the nature (as opposed to the number of times) of what is being forgiven?
  2. What is the short answer? How does the longer answer (the parable) amplify the reason for the short answer?
  3. Does Jesus’ command to forgive without limits mean that we are not to hold others accountable for what they do? What do the other passages aid in answering this question?
  4. When dealing with sin and forgiveness what is the ultimate objective? See Romans 5:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.
- ii. The story of Jonah has interesting examples of forgiveness at work and forgiveness withheld. The book of Jonah is short, and you may want to read the entire thing or at least Jonah 2:1-10 and 3:10-3.
  1. Who seems to have received the greatest forgiveness in the story of Jonah? What was his response (4:1)? What was Jonah’s real problem?
  2. How often do you see Jonah's racial prejudice affecting the willingness of Christians to forgive others today?
  3. How does 2 Chronicles 7:14 apply to the story of Jonah?

4. Read the account of Jesus being anointed by the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-48. What does this event teach in relation to the story of Jonah?

*e. Thursday*

i. Read Matthew 6:5-15.

1. What is the most striking aspect of what Jesus teaches us about prayer in this passage?
2. Compare the Lord's model prayer in Matthew with the version in Luke 11:2-4. What is different? What additional insight is provided?
3. Scan through the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 to refresh your mind on what Jesus taught about how we should live as citizens of His kingdom. What should be our attitude as we seek to forgive others? Ourselves?
4. Some readers of the prayer have concluded that God's forgiveness is earned by our own forgiveness of others. Other readers believe that our forgiveness of other people is the evidence that God has forgiven us. Explain why you agree or disagree with each view. Regardless, if we refuse to forgive another person, what do Jesus' words force us to conclude about ourselves?
5. Think seriously about the implications of praying Jesus' model prayer as it relates to your possible unwillingness to forgive even a single individual.

ii. The book of Philemon is all about forgiveness. Read the entire book (it is only 25 verses).

1. Why do you think Paul loved Onesimus so dearly?
2. How did Onesimus becoming a Christian change his relationship with Philemon?
3. Why doesn't Paul simply command Philemon to forgive?
4. What does this book teach us about our acceptance of someone who has hurt or betrayed us?

*f. Friday:* Today just read and meditate on Mark 11:25. Spend your study time praying for the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the names of every person you need to forgive and to give you a forgiving and loving attitude.

*g. Saturday:* Today reread the quotations presented in the Opening Discussion segment in light of what you have learned about forgiveness this week. Has your understanding and acceptance of any of the quotations changed?

4. **Application:** The application is simple- forgive. Continue to think of people that you need to forgive and do so.

**5. Prayer Points:**

- a. Adoration – Psalms 8:1 and 29:1-2
- b. Confession – Proverbs 28:13 and 1 John 1:8-10
- c. Thanksgiving – Psalms 95:1-2 and 100:4-5
- d. Supplications –Matthew 21:22 and John 16:19