
Forgiveness

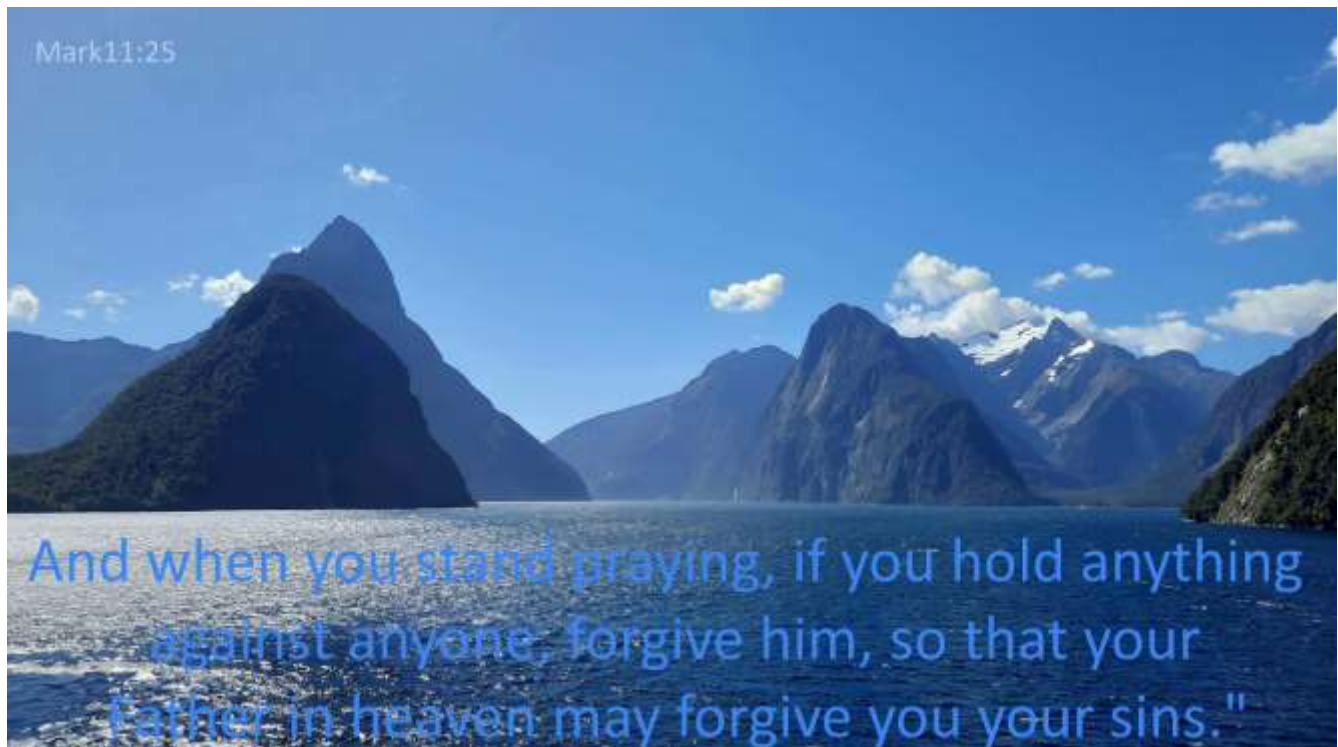
Study 4 – The Response – Steve Hyndman

The following is a summary of the transcript of the Study prepared using the AI facility ChatGPT – Open AI.
The full study can be viewed at the following URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el_H4wEGfgA

The essence of our spiritual journey and understanding of God involves recognizing and emulating His actions and character, particularly in the realm of forgiveness. **By giving us the power to forgive, God invites us to think like Him**, thereby placing significant control and responsibility in our hands. This is a profound and challenging aspect of our faith.

Forgiveness is not merely an abstract concept but a practical application of the principles we've learned. It reflects our genuine understanding and appreciation of what it means to be reconciled with God. The journey towards forgiveness is fraught with difficulty because it requires us to act contrary to our natural instincts. We often resist forgiving those who have wronged us, believing they must pay for their actions. This resistance stems from our carnal nature, which harbors grudges and resists letting go.

The process of forgiveness involves three key steps: **confession of sin, repentance, and conversion.** A fourth critical condition is discussed in **Matthew 6, where Jesus teaches us to pray for forgiveness of our debts as we forgive our debtors.** This conditional forgiveness from God depends on our willingness to forgive others. Mark 11 reinforces this by stating that if we do not forgive, neither will God forgive us. **This conditionality emphasizes the reciprocal nature of forgiveness in our spiritual lives.**



God expects us to be proactive in initiating forgiveness, even if we believe someone has something against us, as highlighted in Matthew 5:23-24. This proactive approach towards reconciliation mirrors God's own proactive nature in forgiving us. **Our goal should always be to drive towards unity, as God loves unity, reflecting His singular, cohesive nature.**

Forgiveness must be rooted in love, as emphasized in 1 Corinthians 13:3 and various passages in John's gospel and epistles. Proverbs 10:12 and 17:9 highlight that love covers all sins and that forgiveness maintains friendships. **Love, particularly *agape* love, is self-sacrificing and essential for forgiving others.**

Forgiveness requires power, a power that belongs to God and Jesus Christ. They alone can forgive actual sins, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. **Our role is to forgive the person, not the sin itself, which remains within God's domain.** This distinction is crucial as it prevents us from assuming a role beyond our capacity and understanding.

God acknowledges our struggle with forgiveness, recognizing our emotional and psychological frailty. While we may not always be able to forgive and forget, we can strive to forgive and remind ourselves of that forgiveness. Prayer is essential in seeking God's strength to achieve this state of mind.

Reflecting on Jesus' crucifixion, where He forgave His tormentors in the midst of His suffering, can help us put our grievances into perspective. His example teaches us the importance of letting go of grudges, which can be debilitating and imprisoning. Forgiveness frees us, as holding grudges often only harms ourselves.

Our personal forgiveness from God is conditional upon how we forgive others. This reciprocal relationship is highlighted in the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18. The servant, forgiven a great debt, fails to forgive a smaller debt, illustrating the importance of reflecting God's forgiveness in our interactions.

Forgiveness should not be a burdensome obligation but a privilege and an honor. It allows us to mimic God and experience His position, reinforcing the enormity of His forgiveness towards us. Embracing this perspective can transform our approach to forgiveness, making it a joyful and fulfilling aspect of our spiritual lives.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, **Paul encapsulates the transformative power of God's reconciliation** and how it should reflect in our interactions with one another. He writes, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (ESV). This signifies that being in Christ results in a profound change, making us a new creation, a work initiated and completed by God.

Paul emphasizes that this transformation and reconciliation are from God, who, through Christ, reconciled us to Himself and entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation. This means that, as recipients of God's reconciliation, we are now tasked with extending this reconciliation to others. Paul continues in verse 19, explaining that in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and has committed to us the message of reconciliation. Hence, we are called to be ambassadors for Christ, representing Him and conveying His message of reconciliation.

The role of an ambassador involves representing the interests and speaking the language of the country of origin. *Similarly, as ambassadors for Christ, we are to represent him, embodying his teachings and character.* God makes His appeal through us, and Paul urges us to be reconciled to God. This reflects Christ's prayer in John 17 for unity among His followers, mirroring the unity between him and the Father.

Paul's teaching on reconciliation ties in with Christ's example of washing his disciples' feet in John 13:3-5. This act exemplifies the essence of atonement and forgiveness. *By washing their feet, Jesus symbolically took on their sins, demonstrating the self-sacrificial nature of his impending crucifixion.* This act of service is a model for how we should treat one another—through humility, forgiveness, and love.

In the narrative, when Jesus reaches Peter, Peter initially refuses, not understanding the significance. Jesus explains that unless he washes Peter's feet, Peter has no part with Him. *This underscores the necessity of accepting Christ's cleansing to partake in his forgiveness and the Kingdom of God. The washing of feet here is symbolic of the forgiveness of sins, which is essential for reconciliation with God.*

Jesus' interaction with Peter highlights that forgiveness and reconciliation are about the continuous need for forgiveness. Despite Peter's initial reluctance, Jesus' gentle yet firm response indicates the importance of understanding and accepting his act of forgiveness.

Moreover, Jesus' washing of Judas' feet, despite knowing Judas' impending betrayal, illustrates the profound depth of his forgiveness. *This challenges us to forgive others, even when they might not seek or deserve it, mirroring Christ's unconditional forgiveness.*

Paul connects this to the idea of being a living sacrifice, as mentioned in Ephesians 4. This involves putting away bitterness, wrath, anger, and malice, and instead being kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving, as God forgave us in Christ. Forgiveness is portrayed not as a grudging duty but as a liberating and joyful act that benefits both the forgiver and the forgiven.

In conclusion, 2 Corinthians 5:17 and the related passages emphasize the transformative power of reconciliation in Christ. *As new creations, we are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, embodying and extending God's forgiveness to others.* This involves a continuous process of forgiveness, reflecting Christ's example and embodying the character of God in our relationships.

Steve Hyndman
