

7. How do you know God has forgiven you? What difference does it make to be forgiven?

PRAYER

Merciful God, always help me to remember that forgiveness is your natural inclination. This is your “default setting” for my life. Help me to accept that which I cannot do for myself. Help me always to remember there is more mercy in you than sin in me. Help me to realize I cannot “out-sin” your mercy. Speak tenderly into my heart and let your joy become my joy, in spite of my self-doubts and pride. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

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SERMON SERIES STUDY GUIDE

NORTH: Nov. 1/5 | SOUTH: Nov. 8/12 | CHAPEL: Nov. 19



This study guide was written by the Pastors at Hope Lutheran Church in Fargo, ND. Find this resource and others at [**FARGOHOPE.ORG/RESOURCES**](https://fargo-hope.org/resources)

COMMUNION WITH GOD

Pastor Paul Nynas

COMMUNION WITH GOD

READ: Luke 22:17-20

This scripture recounts the words Jesus used to institute the last supper he would eat with his disciples, what we now call “The Lord’s Supper” or “Holy Communion.” Luke’s words are simple and concise but, oh so profound.

Martin Luther, in his “Small Catechism,” describes the necessity of forgiveness for our faith walk which this event inaugurated. He wrote: “What benefits do we receive from this sacrament? The benefits of this sacrament are pointed out by the words, ‘given and shed for you for the remission of sins.’ These words assure us that in this sacrament we receive forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.”

Forgiveness is an essential dimension of the Christian life. In fact, William Ward once said, “We are most like beasts when we kill. We are most like men when we judge. We are most like God when we forgive.” We need our “daily bread” for our daily life. So, too, in our faith walk we need God’s forgiveness through the Lord’s Supper. Pastor Bruce Larson once recalled a cartoon in the “New Yorker” magazine that showed an exasperated father saying to his prodigal son, “This is the fourth time we’ve killed the fatted calf!” God does that over and over in our life!

Lewis Smedes reminds us all why God’s forgiveness is so essential for our well-being in his book, “Forgive and Forget.” “Forgiveness is God’s invention for coming to terms with a world in which, despite their best intentions, people are unfair to each other and hurt each other deeply. He began by forgiving us. And he invites us all to forgive each other.” The Lord’s Supper is a good reminder of God’s way of forgiving us!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Describe a time in your life when you most felt the forgiveness of God.
2. Reflect on this truth: When God forgives you, your past isn’t changed, but you do change your future.
3. Comment on this statement from Lewis Smedes: “If you want forgiveness from God and you cannot forgive someone who needs a little forgiveness from you, forget about the forgiveness you want.” Why is this statement important?
4. Discuss this quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “Some people think they are doing God a favor when they refuse his forgiveness, reasoning that he is so mad at them that he does not want to see them anyway. Such people insult God, for they live as though Christ’s death and resurrection were insufficient for their salvation.”
5. Why do we still struggle with feelings of guilt and self-hatred when we know the truth that God forgives us?
6. Think of a time when you felt God could never forgive you. What dynamics prevented you from acknowledging God’s word of forgiveness upon your soul?