

### Media and Graphics Notes

<b>Sermon Starter Video?</b>	Yes
<b>Sermon Notes?</b>	Yes, there are scripture verse throughout the sermon

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## Key Questions

### ***What is this sermon about?***

This sermon is about forgiveness, sin and repentance.

### ***Why is this sermon important?***

This sermon is important because forgiveness is part of the nature and character of God. It is central to the Christian faith. While we struggle with receiving forgiveness, God is ready to forgive.



### ***What is the context of this sermon?***

This is the first of a two week sermon series between Easter and a capital campaign. It has been adapted from sermon series *Forgiveness* by Adam Hamilton at <http://cor.org/content/forgiveness>.

### ***What are the next action steps?***

Repent, confess and receive God's forgiveness.

### ***What is the good news (bottom line)?***

The good news is that God is ready to forgive our sins. Jesus doesn't forget our sins, he chooses not to remember them.

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## Metadata

### **Topic(s)**

1. Change Lives
2. Make Disciples

### **Sermon Books of the Bible**

1. Jeremiah
2. Psalms

3rd Sunday of Easter  
Forgiveness - Receive Forgiveness  
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado  
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1Px2N9P>

April 10, 2016  
Psalm 32:1-5  
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## Tags

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## Psalm 32:1-5, CEB

The one whose wrongdoing is forgiven, whose sin is covered over, is truly happy!  
The one the Lord doesn't consider guilty—in whose spirit there is no dishonesty  
—that one is truly happy!  
When I kept quiet, my bones wore out; I was groaning all day long—every day,  
every night!—because your hand was heavy upon me.  
My energy was sapped as if in a summer drought.  
So I admitted my sin to you; I didn't conceal my guilt.  
"I'll confess my sins to the Lord," is what I said.  
Then you removed the guilt of my sin.

### Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.  
**All: Thanks be to God!**

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## Introduction

### Sermon Starter Video

[Play sermon starter video.](#)

### Series Review

Today we begin a two week series of sermons focused on the topic of forgiveness. We are going to be looking at the two dimensions of forgiveness - our willingness to ask for it and our willingness to extend forgiveness to others. This week, we will take a closer look at what this looks like with our relationship with God. Next week, we will consider what this looks like in our close relationships with other people.

## Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

### *Take Notes*

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today.

### *God Speaking*

I pray that you will hear God speaking to you sometime during the service today. Listen for God's word for you – something that helps you live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Whenever you hear it, write it down.

### *Tool for Spiritual Growth*

Then, take this bulletin home with you so that you can grow in your faith outside of worship by reflecting on what you heard today, praying for others connected with our community and reading scripture.

## Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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## Forgiveness is essential

I am sorry.

I forgive you.

These six words are absolutely essential to our lives. You can't survive in a marriage without extending or asking for forgiveness. You can't see a working relationship prosper. You are not going to have any friends, if you don't know how to forgive or ask for forgiveness.

## JoeApology.com

This week I found a website where you can go online to apologize to someone. This is maybe not a great way to apologize, but perhaps these are people who don't know how to get in contact with the other person. Perhaps, they are practicing it before following up in a more personal way. Here are some of the examples:

### ***To the Person I Cut Off***

*to the person i cut off while driving yesterday - i am truly sorry. i don't know what i was thinking. i do not usually drive that recklessly.<sup>1</sup>*

### ***Darth Vader Potato Head***

*i'm sorry that by the time i went to order the darth vader potato head they were sold out. i'm also sorry that your birthday present was not star wars related.<sup>2</sup>*

### ***The Teddy Bear and the Toy Store Manager***

*I'm sorry that I lost my temper after waiting in line for an excruciatingly long time to try and buy a teddy bear from your store. I'm sorry that when I gave up and walked out of the store I decided to demonstrate my annoyance by throwing the unpurchased teddy bear at the first employee to cross my path. I'm sorry that it was you as the manager that got in the way of that furry missile. It wasn't your fault that the lines were moving soooooo very slowly. It wasn't your fault that the extra till you tried to open in front of me was broken. It wasn't your fault that every queue had a customer with an item that*

<sup>1</sup> <http://joeapology.com/post/82892644657/to-the-person-i-cut-off>

<sup>2</sup> <http://joeapology.com/post/82789995560/darth-vader-potato-head>

*wouldn't scan. It wasn't your fault that I was on a deadline to get to a charity event where I would be donating that teddy bear to disadvantaged kids. It definitely isn't your fault that I might be losing my job just before christmas. But you took the blame in that moment of lost temper and for that I am sorry.<sup>3</sup>*

### **Trying to Turn it Around**

*"dear mom and dad,*  
  
*im sorry that i screwed up so bad. i have really been trying to turn it around honest. i cost you both a lot of money we didnt really have and put you under tremendous stress. i'm sorry, i never thought it would happen like this and i hope that one day i can make it all up to you. i love you both so much*  
  
*- your daughter"<sup>4</sup>*

### **Questions of Forgiveness**

Situations like this raise questions, like:  
How can I be reconciled to the one that I wronged?  
How can I ever make it right?  
How can my burden of guilt be removed?

Forgiveness is God's answer to these questions.

### **Our need for forgiveness**

We all ask these questions. It may not be so serious as this last story, but we all struggle with these questions because we are human. Because we are human, we are going to make mistakes, hurt other people and others will hurt us too. We have to know how to forgive.

### **Transition**

Now, to make sense of forgiveness, we have to talk about sin.

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## **Sin**

It is not always fun to talk about sin, but we have to understand what it is to be able to offer and receive forgiveness.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://joeapology.com/post/120063933779/the-teddy-bear-and-the-toy-store-manager>

<sup>4</sup> <http://joeapology.com/post/82616409542/trying-to-turn-it-around>

## **Stray from the Path / Miss the Mark**

### ***Words in Old and New Testament***

In the Old Testament, the primary word that is translated to the English word sin, means to stray from the path.

In the New Testament, the primary word means to miss the mark.

### ***God's Path***

In both cases, there is the implication that there is a way that we are supposed to live as human beings. We are meant to love. We are meant to do justice. We are meant to care for people and put the needs of others before our own. There are all kinds of things that you can imagine are on the path that God has laid out for us.

### ***Illustration: Struggle with God's Path***

The truth is that most of us struggle in walking that path.

We miss the mark.

We stray from the path.

You might imagine two lines.

[hold out both arms pointing straight ahead and move one by degrees]

One is God's path and the other is when we stray from that path.

As we stray from the path, we find that there is an increasing gap between ourselves and others – with our spouse, our families, our co-workers and from God. There are things that we can do that build up a barrier between us and others. The alternative path and the things that we do that separate us from others can all be captured by the word sin.

This happens for every one of us.

We all sin and fall short of what God has for us.

### ***Feel the Gap***

Every so often, we feel this gap. The total of our sins begins to add up and we begin to feel farther and farther away from God. We find that we have drifted from God. We don't seem to feel God's presence any more. It seems that life becomes harder than it is supposed to be.

### ***Transition***

The Psalmist felt this.



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## Our Relationship with God

### Penitential Psalms

#### ***Psalm 32:3-4***

Our scripture passage from today is one of several Psalms that describe this feeling. Hear again these words from Psalm 32:3-4

“When I kept quiet, my bones wore out; I was groaning all day long—every day, every night!—because your hand was heavy upon me. My energy was sapped as if in a summer drought.”<sup>5</sup>

This is what the Psalmist felt when describing this alienation from God.

#### ***Psalm 38:4***

Psalm 38 is another example of one of these psalm:

“My wrongdoings are stacked higher than my head; they are a weight that’s way too heavy for me.”<sup>6</sup>

I find this to be a really helpful metaphor. Our guilt, burden and shame is a weight that’s way too heavy for me. I shared this with you a couple years ago, but I find it powerful enough that I’ll share it with you again.

### **Illustration: Rocks and Backpack - [Get out backpack]**

The idea that when we don’t ask for God’s forgiveness and don’t seek to be reconciled to God, then we carry around the guilt and weight of that with us. We may not even recognize it at first.

#### ***Small things - [Begin to fill backpack with stones]***

Some of our sins seem fairly small to us -

It was the little insult that we gave and walked away...

The way that we treated the person at the cash register...

When we snapped at our spouses.

#### ***More serious - [Continue to fill backpack with stones]***

Sometimes they are more serious than that

They are the intentional, hurtful things that we say and we keep saying them or doing them.

We carry them around with us in our souls.

We carry them, so long as we don’t confess them and repent of them.

We continue to carry these things.

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 32:3-4, CEB.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 38:4, CEB.

***Heavy - [Continue to fill backpack with stones]***

Some of them become quite heavy.

There are somethings, that really, if someone found out about it, we might lose our jobs, lose our families, break the law...

We don't come to God and seek forgiveness, we just carry them with us.

***Weight of Sin - [put on backpack]***

You can carry them.

Maybe at first you don't hardly notice, but when you keep carrying these things and adding to them every day, what you find is that the burden becomes overwhelming after a time.

You find yourself reflecting the words of the Psalmist:

*I was groaning all day long—every day, every night!—because your hand was heavy upon me. My energy was sapped as if in a summer drought.”<sup>7</sup>*

*“My wrongdoings are stacked higher than my head; they are a weight that’s way too heavy for me.”<sup>8</sup>*

We keep carrying this and adding to it until we repent and come before God.  
The gulf becomes wider and God becomes more distant.

**God's Desire to Forgive**

God desires to take our burdens from us.

***Old Testament***

In the Old Testament we find that there was a whole system that people could use to atone for their sins. God wanted them to be healed.

***New Testament***

In the New Testament, we find that the Christian faith is one based on forgiveness, redemption and mercy. We see it in the things that Jesus said and did.

***What Jesus said***

Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God – a place where the sinners who repent enter before the righteous people who are filled with false virtue. Jesus tells us that God's kingdom is like a father who waits for his messed up son to come home and when he does arrive, throws a party and celebrates.

You remember the prayer that Jesus taught us, which we pray every Sunday, that we are to pray “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

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<sup>7</sup> Psalm 32:3-4, CEB.

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 38:4, CEB.

### ***What Jesus did***

Jesus spent most of his time with those who felt estranged from God. He was constantly looking for the sinners and outcasts. The pious people, of course, didn't realize that they were sinners and outcasts, too. He called the people to repent of their sin and in repenting to embrace their forgiveness.

### ***Psalm 103:8-12***

Forgiveness is part of the nature and character of God, so that we read these words in Psalm 103:8-12:

The Lord is compassionate and merciful, very patient, and full of faithful love. God won't always play the judge; he won't be angry forever. He doesn't deal with us according to our sin or repay us according to our wrongdoing, because as high as heaven is above the earth, that's how large God's faithful love is for those who honor him. As far as east is from west—that's how far God has removed our sin from us.<sup>9</sup>

God has already accepted you.

When you turn to God, God is already reaching out to you.

God offers us grace that came at a great price.

God has an extravagant willingness to forgive.

### ***Transition***

We know this in our heads, yet sometimes we struggle to take it down to our hearts. We keep carrying burdens that God has already sought to remove. God is already willing to carry our burden, yet we feel that we need to keep carrying them.

How do we let go and receive forgiveness?

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## **Repentance**

When it comes to receiving forgiveness and removing that gap, Christians talk about that by using the word repentance. This means to recognize that you are going the wrong direction and turn back to the way that you know God desires for you.

### **Awareness, Repentance, Confess**

Repentance begins with an awareness that I have stepped off the path. I have messed up and done something to break down my relationships with God and other people. I feel the weight of it and don't want to carry that weight any more.

Then, it is to turn toward the other – to turn toward God.

Next, we confess and ask for God's mercy. It's simple.

I feel the burden, I feel the gap.

I turn towards God.

I express my remorse and try to make amends, in whatever way I can.

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<sup>9</sup> Psalm 103:8-12, CEB.

I ask for God's forgiveness and God forgives me.

### **Personal Example: Forgiveness from Nicole**

You know, there are times when Nicole and I are in conflict. It happens. I do things and say things, at times, that are hurtful to her. When I have done that and begin to feel the gap in our relationship, I start to think, "Why did you do that? Those words were hurtful. That was really stupid."

I come back to her and say, "Nicole, I'm really sorry for that thing I said or what I did. I know it hurt you. I don't want to do it again."

Almost always the same thing happens, she says "I forgive you."

Then I feel this burden that is lifted.

This gives me a glimpse of what God does when we repent and confess our sin.

### **Psalm 32:5**

This is why the Psalmist could say this, from our passage for today:

So I admitted my sin to you; I didn't conceal my guilt. "I'll confess my sins to the Lord," is what I said. Then you removed the guilt of my sin. <sup>10</sup>

The picture I have for that, when we finally do this and finally give it to God. When we accept God's mercy and trust in God, we find that the burden is lifted.

### **[Drop backpack]**

This is how you feel when you actually trust that God has forgiven you. You find that you have life in a new way again because you have experienced the grace of God, which is exactly what God wants you to know.

### **Illustration: Ron Lee Davis**

Here's a story to illustrate.

In the book, "A Forgiving God in an Unforgiving World, Ron Lee Davis retells the true story of a priest in the Philippines, a much-loved man of God who carried the burden of a secret sin he had committed many years before. He had repented but still had no peace, no sense of God's forgiveness.

In his parish was a woman who deeply loved God and who claimed to have visions in which she spoke with Christ and he with her. The priest, however, was skeptical. To test her said, "The next time you speak with Christ, I want you to ask him what sin your priest committed while he was in seminary." The woman agreed.

A few days later the priest asked., "Well, did Christ visit you in your dreams?"

"Yes, he did," she replied.

"And did you ask him what sin I committed in seminary?"

"Yes."

"Well, what did he say?"

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<sup>10</sup> Psalm 32:5, CEB.

“He said, ‘I don’t remember’”<sup>11</sup>

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## Conclusion

### Good News

The good news is that God is ready to forgive our sins. Jesus doesn’t forget our sins, he chooses not to remember them.

### **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

We read in Jeremiah 31:31-34:

The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. It won’t be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant with me even though I was their husband, declares the Lord. No, this is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my Instructions within them and engrave them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. They will no longer need to teach each other to say, “Know the Lord!” because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord; for I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins.<sup>12</sup>

### Call to Action

The choice is yours.

### Invitation

You can keep trying to carry this thing around.

### **[Pick up backpack]**

But God would love to take it from you, set you free and forgive all your sins.

Today, you can repent, confess and receive God’s forgiveness.

### **[Set down backpack]**

### Closing Prayer

Jesus, I am sorry for all the times in my life when I mess up.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/gods-forgiveness-nathan-johnson-sermon-on-forgiveness-in-jesus-122996.asp>

<sup>12</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34, CEB.Jeremi

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*And if anything comes to mind, ask God's forgiveness.*

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Forgive me of my sin and all that I know is wrong.  
Thank you for your love and forgiveness.  
Thank you for Jesus, who lived, died and rose again for me.  
I trust you with my life.  
Please fill me with your Spirit.  
Help me receive your forgiveness.  
and follow you all of my days.  
In your holy name, Amen.