



SERIES OVERVIEW

"Love's Last Words"

Preacher: Pastor Dave Swaim

"Father Forgive"

February 18, 2018

[Series Sermon Recordings](#)

[Discipleship Resources](#)

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

Note cards (or paper) and pens.

QUESTIONS?

Email Abby

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LEADER NOTE: UPDATES & REMINDERS

LENTEN REFLECTION CARDS

Each week, there will be a different card handed out at the beginning of each service. This will give you an opportunity to reflect on an image and reflect on a passage for that week of Lent.

Rachael Denhollander Statement to Larry Nassar

In Pastor Dave's sermon, he refers to Rachael Denhollander, who was one of the first victims to break the silence about Larry Nassar's sexual abuse of USA gymnasts.

[A warning that in her statement she discusses in detail what happened to her and is confronting her abuser in court.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8jUCrPARHQ)

Please be mindful in your discussions (and if you discuss this video above-) that for you or those in your group, assault or abuse may be a part of their/ your story.

If you are experiencing abuse or feel unsafe, mass.gov provides an array of resources for you to connect with an advocate and our [pastoral staff team](#) is available to you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HOW TO USE: *The three sections below (opening, sermon content questions, and application) represent the three connections we emphasize at Highrock: connecting to **God's People**, connecting to **God Personally** and connecting to **God's Purposes**. Select at least one question from each section or create questions that are more specific to your group.*

WEEKLY CHECK IN

Use a few minutes at the beginning of your time to follow up on any action items shared from last week. Was there a **next step or application** challenge that they took on this past week? What did they learn about themselves and following Jesus?

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

Choose ONE of these that fits your group, or modify it so that it will fit your group better. These can make great **opening questions or ending questions**. If you have had a really in-depth conversation, ending on a light note can help transition to concluding your time Together on a less intense question.

1. What connotations, meanings, thoughts, or feelings do you have around the word forgiveness?

SERMON QUESTIONS

Use a **couple of the questions** below or make up your own. You can always begin with: "Do you have any questions about what you heard in the sermon this week?" Or, "What stood out to you from the Pastor's sermon?"

1. Pastor's Dave suggests the inability to give and receive forgiveness is the major cause of brokenness and division -- do you agree? Why or why not?
 - a. **Sermon Reference:** *"After more than 20 years in ministry, I've come to believe that the primary cause of most broken families, broken friendships, alienated teenagers, miserable marriages, depression, people leaving the faith, and church splits is simply our inability to sustain healthy relationships because we don't know how to give and receive real forgiveness."*
2. What is your first gut reaction to being wronged?
 - a. **Sermon Reference:** *Jesus forgave those who sinned against him. And this wasn't an afterthought; it was the first word out of his mouth. Is that the first word that would come out of your mouth?*
3. This sermon is about Jesus' last words. Before diving into this week's word, go around and as a group review the narrative of Jesus' life- things Jesus did, said, taught, and endured. Spend about 5 or so minutes and then focus on what happened at the end of Jesus' life. Now, consider the question: What is it like for you to hear that Jesus' first words on the cross are words of forgiveness?
 - a. **Sermon Reference:** *"As they tortured him, the Jewish and Roman authorities who'd conspired to crucify him were waiting for him to cry out in anguish, or to scream in rage. The ancient Roman philosopher Cicero writes that often soldiers had to cut the tongues out of those who'd been crucified to stop their violent blasphemies. Everyone knew Jesus would speak, but no one imagined He's say: (Luke 23:33-34a) "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing."*
4. What is it like for you to know that God takes your suffering seriously?

- a. **Sermon Reference:** *"In these situations we may find comfort in God's commitment to justice. (Nahum 1:3a) We read "the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished". It's an expression of God's love that He takes sin seriously and will defend the dignity of its victims by demanding sin be accounted for. It matters because victims matter. This is good news if you've ever been hurt or exploited before – God takes your suffering seriously! He's not brushing it under the rug!"*
5. After discussing the point above (question 4), consider Pastor Dave's next point, *"On the other hand, this is also terrifying, because all of us have spurned God and hurt others time and time again. We're the victims of sin, but we're also the perpetrators!"* How do we come to terms that we are also sinners, perpetrators of hurting others (with our anger, out of fear and insecurities, to feel powerful...).
- a. What is it like for you to consider your own sin? How about asking forgiveness (confessing to a person you have hurt them).
- b. Has a regular pattern of confession before God ever been a prayer of your prayer life? How might our relationship with God around confession affect our relationship with others and our ability to regularly confess and repent?
6. Pastor Dave says, "Whenever someone SINS, someone SUFFERS, and JUSTICE demands that someone PAY." How does this comfort and or disturb you?
- a. **Sermon Reference:** *"If you insult me, my pride suffers. If you steal my credit card my bank account suffers. If you gossip about me, my reputation suffers. When a person in power exploits someone beneath them, that person's career, or emotional health suffers. Whenever someone sins, someone suffers, and justice demands that someone pay."*
7. What does it mean to you that Jesus satisfies both justice and expresses mercy at the same time?
- a. **Sermon Reference:** *"What this mean is that God's justice demands that the sin be punished, but His mercy implores Him to free His beloved people from punishment, which is an impossible bind. But God ingeniously accomplishes both by paying the cost for our sin himself by dying on the cross. So He can be both just and merciful to us."*
8. Together, discuss the significance of Jesus' death on the cross. What is so incredible about this act of God dying in our place?
- a. **Sermon Reference:** *"The disciples didn't understand it until afterward, (Matt 16:21) but this is why Jesus had to suffer. He was coming to pay for our sin, because we couldn't. We'd be paying it off forever! So Jesus dying on the cross is God saying that the way you were sinned against matters, because you matter. God refuses to brush it under the rug and look the other way. It's evil, so someone has to pay and make it right. So by coming as Jesus - God paid it."*
9. Do you have a story of forgiving or of being forgiven where God showed up?
- a. **Sermon Reference:** *"TRUE forgiveness requires naming a SIN, but then rather than waiting for the perpetrator REPAY us, forgiveness means choosing to CLOSE the account - just like GOD did for US."*
- b. Do you have an experience of trust being broken and restored? Can you share this with us?
- i. **Sermon Reference:** *"Just because she says I don't have to pay the consequences doesn't mean that there are no consequences. If we stop there, we're not reconciled. Yes she's forgiven me, and yes, I've received it, but that doesn't mean that she has to pretend she learned nothing from the experience. She'll be less likely to trust me in the future because I've proven myself unworthy of that trust."*

APPLICATION/S

1. Pastor Dave shared that forgiveness is never easy, it can be painful and take hard work in our own hearts. Why is it so important to do the work to be able to forgive? What does it mean to you that God sees all that you have faced and has gone through the work of forgiving sins too? What does it look like for you to trust God with justice and mercy in your life and relationships?
 - a. **Sermon Reference:** *“Real forgiveness is never easy - not for God, and not for us! So then what does it mean to forgive others? It doesn’t mean to minimize the seriousness of their offense. It doesn’t mean to forget about it, to just pretend it never happened, or pretend it didn’t hurt.”*
2. In the opening and closing of the sermon, Pastor Dave invited us to consider those who have hurt us and sinned against us. Then we were invited to consider forgiving them - not forgetting- but forgiving. What might the start of that process look like for you? What do you think about Anne LaMott’s quote, *“not forgiving someone is like drinking rat poison - and then waiting for the rat to die.”* Some of you have sacrificed your spiritual vitality and peace, not because of the way you were sinned against, as you suspect, but because you’ve refused to forgive.”
3. We will all need to be on both sides of the three steps that pastor Dave shared for a structure of having a forgiveness conversation. This week, invite God to show you where you need to admit you have hurt someone. Pray also for ears to listen and receive all three of their responses to you. When you gather as a group next week, as you are willing, share a time when you asked forgiveness.

Three steps:

I was Wrong...	<i>you were wrong</i>
I hurt you...	<i>you did hurt me</i>
Will you forgive me?	<i>I forgive you.</i>

CLOSING

Summarize the key points of your discussion and encourage people to **share one action step** they could take during the next week based on what they have shared. **Take time to pray together.** Write those down and start next week by checking in with how it went, or better yet, check in during the week!

RESOURCES

SERMON SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

Luke 23:32- 34a

32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. 34a Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

SCRIPTURE STUDY: 5Cs

If you are interested in studying the scripture more deeply, one way to study scripture is through using the 5 Cs. Read through the passage and move through each C. The goal is not to move through them quickly but to really consider each section. If you wanted to study the passage together, you, as the leader should take some time beforehand to complete the Cs and it can be helpful to have group members come prepared with the first 3 already considered. Then, as a group you can briefly talk over some of the points and then have a longer conversation about curiosities and conclusions. This study tool will be posted within all of the discussion questions.

- **Context:** What is the literary context of the passage? What comes before? After? Context within whole book? Relation to main idea of section, book, testament, whole Bible?
- **Christ:** How is Jesus revealed here? If in OT, prefiguration, typology, prophesy, implications for Christ's person and work? How is he needed, anticipated, fulfilled?
- **Crux:** What is the main idea? Try and find a section of the text that states it and have reasons for why that is the main idea? How do the other points support it?
- **Curiosities:** What is surprising about this text? Controversial? Mysterious? Shocking?
- **Conclusions:** What are the implications for our lives? Application? How do we think, feel, and act in light of this text?