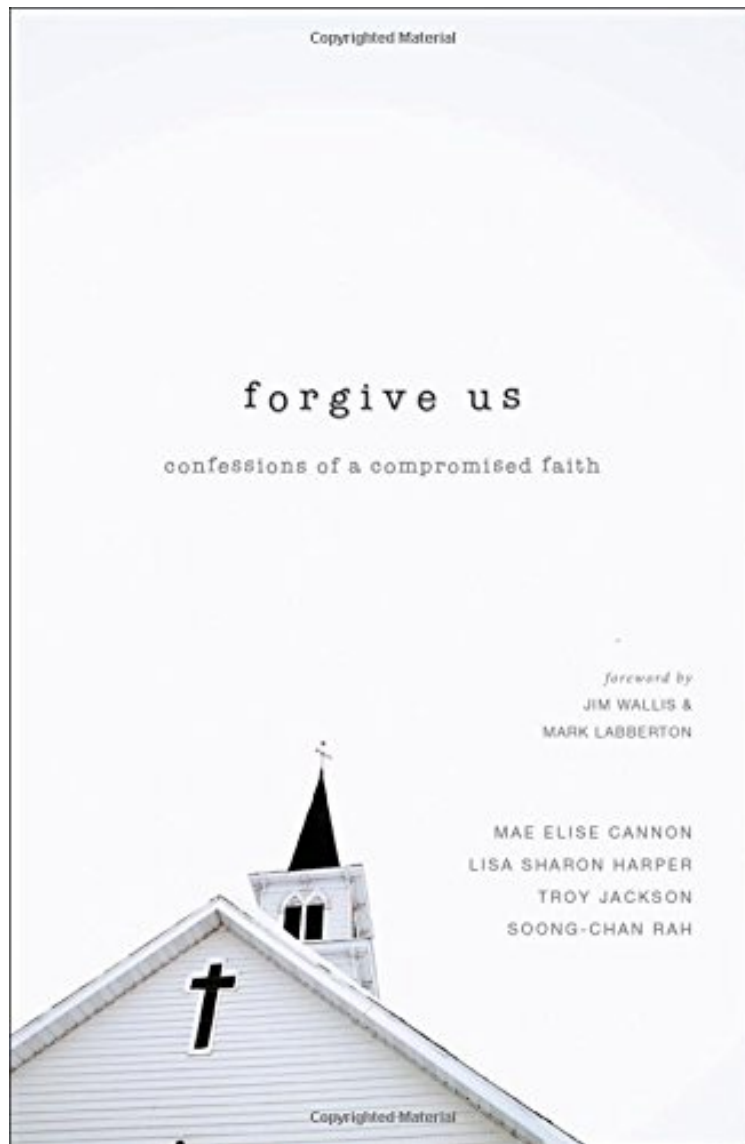


[Free pdf] Forgive Us: Confessions of a Compromised Faith

## Forgive Us: Confessions of a Compromised Faith

*Mae Elise Cannon, Lisa Sharon Harper, Troy Jackson, Soong-Chan Rah*  
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#238582 in Books HarperCollins Christian Pub. 2014-09-23 2014-09-23 Original language: English PDF # 1  
8.39 x .75 x 5.63l, .50 #File Name: 0310515963240 pages | File size: 41.Mb

**Mae Elise Cannon, Lisa Sharon Harper, Troy Jackson, Soong-Chan Rah : Forgive Us: Confessions of a Compromised Faith** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Forgive Us: Confessions of a Compromised Faith:

16 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Forgive Us: Confessions of a Compromised Faith - a guide for the serious Christian. By James Carstensen Brought up as a Lutheran it is natural for me to believe that my salvation is by God's grace alone. He has saved me, a lost and terrible sinner, and by his grace has made salvation glorious. My only

act for salvation is a state of contrition. I am an American and have been influenced by the Protestant Work Ethic. I have seen this operate in my country all of my 69 years. It has become a self serving excuse to see works as salvific. I have seen the US become an idol whereby the country was initiated by God fearing, Christian men and women. We would become a Christian nation upon a hill for all the world to see. As Americans we would secure our manifest destiny as God had ordained. We have become a nation under God. Our money says that we as a nation trust in God. Because of our chutzpah we have forgotten that we are sinners before God. We have ordained a certain feeling of our righteousness - an America which you love or leave. It is time for us to see ourselves as we really are -- sinners in need of grace. We have compromised the Gospel into a works righteousness. Perhaps the story of Adam and Eve came first because consciousness of sin is the first step towards salvation. We need to know ourselves honestly and not be deceived that we can be like God. *Forgive Us: Confessions of a Compromised Faith* is step in that direction. If read thoughtfully it will bring us back to whom we really are - sinners in need of repentance. The book outlines for us the specifics. Male dominance - an idol. White dominance - an idol. Christian dominance over Jews and Muslims - an idol. Dominance over people who would like to immigrate - an idol. Dominance over homosexuals - an idol. Dominance over nature - an idol. I write as a Christian and an American. I write not to fault America in particular. God knows that all humans are sinners regardless of nationality. I write this review understanding that much of what is stated can be said throughout all of Christendom. Standing not as a disinterested Christian I believe the book to be timely and helpful for all who wish to take Christianity seriously. It is, as Luther noted, the law and our inability to keep it that drives us into the hands of God's saving grace. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Do we make mistakes? By Paul Froehlich We all make mistakes, but only some of us admit them and seek to make amends. A refusal to take responsibility compounds the original offense. The Christian Church has made some mistakes as well, one of which is failing to admit fault and to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. Churches, like people, are often more focused on the sins of others than on their own. Its so much easier and more fun, after all, to criticize someone else. Its also human nature to more readily recognize faults in those we consider opponents than in ourselves. Four evangelical Christians wrote *Forgive Us*. They believe the credibility of Christian witness to the world is damaged by Christian hypocrisy, by refusing to remove the log from our own eye first, as Jesus commanded, before calling out the specks in the eyes of others. According to Robert Putnam in *American Grace* (2010), many young adults, perceive evangelicals as judgmental, self-righteous and intolerant. Mae Cannon and her co-authors propose that the church should offer a counter-narrative of authentic confession and genuine reconciliation. Evangelicals understand well the process on an individual level of acknowledging sin, repenting, and seeking forgiveness. Scripture tells us that it should also be done on the corporate level. Repentance is a recurring theme in the Bible because Gods people are frequently called to repent. Nehemiah, for instance, confessed the sins we Israelites, including myself and my fathers family, have committed against you by disobeying the laws God gave to Moses. Then Nehemiah planned how to correct the situation by going to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. The problem is that Christians as a group are not very good confessing collective failure and seeking forgiveness for it. The absence of confession is related to the absence of lament in church services. A lament recognizes the reality of suffering and offers a petition trusting in Gods judgment, but does not propose a solution. Some 40 percent of Psalms are laments. The book of Lamentations contains a lament and confession on behalf of Gods people. In short, confession in scripture is not limited to the personal and private, but is offered on behalf of the entire community. Worship in American churches, however, does not include communal laments about corporate culpability. Modern evangelicals focus on sin in the culture, but not among ourselves. Corporate confession challenges us to see beyond our individualistic, Western worldview. It recognizes that sin operates collectively, and that the responsibility of the church as a whole is to recognize that it too has sinned collectively. So what are the shortcomings in the American Christian context? The book examines the history of several: environmental degradation and the failure to properly steward Gods creation the genocide of the indigenous people in the Americas and the Churchs culpability racism and the theological roots thereof the oppression of women and the justification of sexism in the church the marginalization of the LGBTQ community nativism prejudice against Jews and Mormons. This review will expand on one of those areas the failure to properly steward Gods creation. The early colonists were primarily Protestants who came to conquer the wilderness in the new world influenced by Genesis 1:28: Replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. Consequently, they cleared the forests, killed animals such as wolves, panthers and bears, and subdued the wilderness. When Genesis says humanity is given dominion over the earth, the word has been misinterpreted as domination, when it is better understood as responsibility or stewardship. Thats how the agricultural Hebrews would have understood it. Their law required that every seven years the land itself must rest. (Leviticus 25:1-7). In short, humanity is to protect the wellness of creation. God creates humans from the dust of the earth. Humanity is placed in a garden and instructed to till and keep it (Gen. 2:15-16). The lack of good stewardship did not end in the colonial era. In the 20th century, there was growing exploitation of the land for its natural resources. The after-effect of strip mining, for example, on the land and nearby inhabitants was not a prime concern of the mining industry. Poor communities were more likely to face risks to their health from toxic dumping by deregulated industries. History shows that Christians not only participated in slaughtering wild animals and

deforestation, but were silent when environmental degradation was happening. Often churches were strong supporters of the polluting industries. Prominent Christians criticized the environmental movement. Dr. James Dobson, for instance, attacked Al Gores climate change message. In recent years, some evangelicals have realized their responsibility to be good stewards of nature, not just exploiters of it. In his book, *Green Like God*, Jonathan Merritt invokes a Christian theological framework for creation care. In Genesis 1:31, at the end of the sixth day of creation, God saw everything he had made, and indeed, it was very good. Biblical scholar Terry McGonigal reads that verse this way: God is delighting in the totality of all creation, the interconnected web of relationships now complete. It was not just the parts of creation that were very good, but the relationships between things as well. Humanity is part of creation and has a relationship with the rest of creation, which industrialization markedly altered. Creation groans as deforestation continues, pesticides affect the health of animals and us, and the level of carbon emissions cause the seas to warm and rise, alter the climate, and put animals and people at risk. Human exploitation of the land has led to its mounting destruction and a break in the stewardship relationship that God established. The book contains some interesting research on the other topics as well: \* In 1864, a Methodist minister -- John M. Chivington -- led a famous massacre at Sand Creek, Colorado, which killed more than a hundred Natives and destroyed a friendly village. Rev. Chivington justified his massacre: Damn any man who sympathizes with Indians I have come to kill Indians, and believe it is right and honorable to use any means under Gods heaven to kill Indians. \* Suffragists fighting for the right to vote were accused by pastors of working against Gods intended order. \* The American Bible Society was founded to distribute Bibles and fight slavery, but it also opposed Catholicism. The renowned minister Lyman Beecher, father of Harriett Beecher Stowe and president of Lane Theological Seminary, also preached about the evils of Catholic immigration. \* The revival of the KKK in 1915 was based upon strong anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic biases. KKK members had to be Protestant. Their motto was Native, White, Protestant Supremacy! *Forgive Us* avoids grappling with three controversial issues: abortion, whether same-sex behavior is automatically a sin, and the New Testament verses prohibiting women from speaking in church. Nevertheless, the book is well researched and challenging. Their point is well taken that Christians wont have credibility in spotlighting the failures of others while failing to recognize their own. #### 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Useful Review of the Sins of the Christian Church By James D. Rapp The scholarship is uneven in this work - I suppose it is in every composite work - but the message is true. Sadly the Christian church has a lot to repent about. Even more sadly it isn't really about to do so. I think the main value of a work like this is to alert any who might pick the book up that there are Christians who are not bigoted and intolerant. It is impossible to escape the hateful language and behaviors of those who call themselves Christian; it is to ubiquitous in our culture. But it is possible to find little enclaves of Christians who are truly living by the golden rule and the Sermon on the Mount. This book should encourage those who are seeking to scout out such groups. Seldom will they find them functioning as an organized congregation; more often they are a tiny subset of a congregation.

Many people have become angry and frustrated with organized religion and evangelical Christianity, in particular. Too often the church has proven to be a source of pain rather than a place of hope. *Forgive Us* acknowledges the legitimacy of much of the anger toward the church. In truth, Christianity in America has significant brokenness in its history that demands recognition and repentance. Only by this path can the church move forward with its message of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. *Forgive Us* is thus a call to confession. From Psalm 51 to the teachings of Jesus to the prayers of Nehemiah, confession is the proper biblical response when Gods people have injured others and turned their backs on Gods ways. In the book of Nehemiah, the author confesses not only his own sins, but also the sins of his ancestors. The history of the American church demands a Nehemiah-style confession both for our deeds and the deeds of those who came before us. In each chapter of *Forgive Us* two pastors who are also academically trained historians provide accurate and compelling histories of some of the American churches greatest shortcomings. Theologian Soong-Chan Rah and justice leader Lisa Sharon Harper then share theological reflections along with appropriate words of confession and repentance. Passionate and purposeful, *Forgive Us* will challenge evangelical readers and issue a heartfelt request to the surrounding culture for forgiveness and a new beginning.

At a time when evangelicals are understandably often seen as pompously pious, *Forgive Us* reads like a confessional booth. Instead of being asked to divulge their sins to us, people who dont share our Christian faith hear us admit how far too many of our predecessors and peers have grievously sinned against others and pledge to live out our faith in ways that are more tangibly aligned with the mercy and grace of Christ. This exceptional book has the power to disarm a cynical world because it is a stunning example of evangelical Christians humbly stripping off our garments of triumphalism and privilege and covering our nakedness with the sackcloth and ashes of true lament and confession. -- Ken Fong, Evergreen Baptist Church of LA (Rosemead) and Executive Director, Fuller Theological Seminarys Asian American Initiative Reading *Forgive Us* was an experience Id never had with any other book: though I expected it to be the kind Id want to put down immediately --- because it would be the kind that convicted me --- I couldnt put it down. Not only did I not want to put it down, at the end of the first chapter I wanted to leap ahead and read each new

chapter simultaneously! Its that good. Like many, I recognize the besetting sins of the church today. But this rich exploration into the history and motivations for our sin was a meaty feast, helping me to understand the reasons we've behaved as we have and fueling my own passion to embrace relationships that are truly patterned after the person of Jesus. I thank these wise, brave authors for the leadership they're providing today with their ministries and with this book. In these pages Christ's bride is being equipped for faithful living. -- Margot Starbuck, author of *Permission Granted: Learning to Live Graciously Among Sinners and Saints* *Forgive Us* strikes me as the hope and sign I have been longing for --- that a new generation is indeed rising up to lead the church into its calling. *Second Chronicles 7:14* says that if God's people would humble themselves, at any time and in any condition, and pray and seek God's face and turn from our wicked ways, then God will hear from heaven and will forgive us and heal our land. This book offers the church the chance to do that deep and cleansing work of repentance, not just to say we're sorry, but to truly turn from our sinful ways in true humility. The thought that God can use a repentant people in the great enterprise of repairing and redeeming the world. . .this should humble us. We all need this book. This is the way and we should all walk in it. -- John Perkins, Founder, John and Vera Mae Perkins Foundation, Co-Founder, Christian Community Development Association *Forgive Us* is timely and unique. It is the heart-cry of a group of friends --- all scholars and justice workers in their own rights --- to bring the biblical imperative of lament, confession, and repentance to key areas of American church history that are often discussed but rarely from this perspective and with such honesty and humility. It aptly calls out the savior attitude of an American church that continues to try to fix problems without recognizing its own complicated role in creating them. *Forgive Us* is a counter-narrative of confession and truth-telling that will leave you wondering why you've never heard the fuller story of so many injustices or realized how Christians have and continue to be complicit in them. It will equip and encourage you toward biblical reconciliation and peace-making as well as honest self-examination and engagement. *Forgive Us* is a much needed addition to the conversation on American religion and politics. -- Ken Wytsma, founder of The Justice Conference; author of *Pursuing Justice: The Call to Live and Die for Bigger Things* Two women and two men, two people of color and two whites --- all four US Christians --- issue a powerful call for lament, forgiveness, repentance, and action for sins of injustice committed throughout the history of the United States. Surprisingly, their confession of sin is directed toward, and on behalf of, the church in the United States. They believe the integrity, and even the survival, of the US church is at stake. *Forgive Us* is a must-read for Christians in the United States. -- Curtiss Paul DeYoung, author, professor, pastor, and activist focused on issues of reconciliation and social justice, Community Renewal Society in Chicago. There are sins we commit as individuals, for which we usually experience some kind of guilt. This book, on the other hand, is about sins that we, as Americans, are committing collectively and for which we as a complicit people should repent. For all of us who need to be sensitized to corporate sins and to the oppression that is perpetrated because of the evils that are inherent in many of the ways our political and economic systems function, this book is both a revelation and a call to action. -- Tony Campolo, Professor of Sociology, Eastern University *Forgive Us* is courageous, honest, painful, and absolutely essential. Courageous because the authors know there will be pushback from some parts of the Body; honest and painful because it tells hardball truths about the sins of the church; and absolutely essential because it calls the church to do what must be done in the face of great sin: lament, confess, and repent. Perhaps on the other side, forgiveness awaits us, as well as another opportunity to tell good news --- the good news of Jesus. -- Al Tizon, Ronald J. Sider Associate, Professor of Holistic Ministry, Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University A powerful urgent plea for Christians to repent. Biblical faith demands that we listen carefully and respond positively. -- Ron Sider, Senior Distinguished Professor of Theology, Holistic Ministry, and Public Policy, Palmer Seminary at Eastern University Its a daunting task, to seek to bring Christians to repentance. With great grace, the authors of *Forgive Us* reveal ways we in the US church treat as less-than-fully-human people made in the image of God. Read with an open, humble heart. And be blessed to find that lament and confession lead to healing, reconciliation, life. -- Deborah Brunt, keytruths.com, author of *We Confess! The Civil War, the South, and the Church* The progress from now we see ourselves in a mirror dimly, but then face to face does not always bring great joy. This book showed me more of myself, of my group, of my heart than I wanted to see clearly. Yet in facing and confessing the ways I have participated in others degradation elevates us both. To ask forgiveness is to not to give up a sense of right and wrong; it is to give up a sense of arrogance and scapegoat theology. This book helps me love my neighbor better and accept God's judgment of us all. -- Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Senior Pastor, Northland - A Church Distributed *First Chronicles 12:32* mentions the sons of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what God's people should do. Of course, one cannot understand our times without going into the past and realizing the roots of our current historical situation. Our brave authors here do this for us, helping us learn things we did not know, underscoring certain features of our past social failings and bad theologies, and then offer insightful theological reflections to help us name sin, seek forgiveness and move forward in newness of life. Anyone wanting to be Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation and agents of God's transforming kingdom simply must grapple with the social sins named in this book, nurturing hearts that can become broken and healed by these stories of pain and compromise. We must learn the rhythms and goodness of grace that comes through lament and admitting guilt. This book will indeed help us be sons and daughters of Issachar --- aware, repentant, wise, and relevant. I pray it gets a wide, wide readership. -- Byron Berger, *Hearts and Minds*

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Forgive Us is a truly courageous and prophetic book. It calls on evangelicals to go beyond paying lip service to social justice to engage in collective confession for the church's complicity in racial, gender, and other forms of oppression. Through its engaged historical and social analysis, *Forgive Us* makes clear that the church must engage in deep introspection to effectively proclaim God's word. This book will challenge many because it offers no cheap grace and pulls no punches in telling the truth about the church's histories of injustice. And yet this book offers hope that through serious and engaged collective confession, Christians can finally become the people we are called to be --- proclaiming God's justice throughout the world. -- Andrea Smith, Board Member of North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Study and author of *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*  
*Forgive Us* points us to vital issues in the American evangelical world where the ball has been dropped and where various traditions may not have provided helpful direction. We are invited by the authors to repent and lament in ways that direct us to strategic opportunities to bring our Bibles and our respective doctrinal standards to the questions of yesterday, today, and tomorrow so that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. These are some of the most important issues facing the church today. -- Anthony B. Bradley, Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics, The King's College and author of *The Political Economy of Liberation*  
In fidelity to the way of Jesus, this collection of prophetic writings is an urgent call to repentance and confession not just for evangelicals but for every Christian denomination and institution. Woe to you rich. . . . (Luke 6:24-26). Do we dare confess the intrinsic evil of the invisible structures of excessive wealth while billions of people live on less than a dollar a day, of the manufacture of weapons of war and destruction, of industry that is devastating the environment, of developers who are destroying indigenous peoples for the sake of development? The authors of this book write for today with the same fire, clarity, and depth of the great prophets of the Bible. -- Rev. Dr. Virgilio Elizondo, Professor of Hispanic and Pastoral Theology, University of Notre Dame  
*Forgive Us* is a strikingly candid and humble admission of the where the contemporary church has been in the wrong. A remarkable quartet of authors and thought-leaders, Cannon, Harper, Jackson, and Rah use biblical examples of honest prayers to seek reconciliation and ask God to heal our land. If you long to see the church be more than right, but also have a right relationship with the world around us, than *Forgive Us* is a must-read! -- Dave Ferguson, author of *Finding Your Way Back To God*, Lead Pastor, Community Christian Church; Spiritual Entrepreneur, New Thing  
The authors' generous hearts help open us to the difficult, prophetic truths they have to share. Aside from looking back on historical transgressions, they challenge us to do the necessary work of confession and reconciliation for the sinfulness in our midst, here and now, both individually and as church. The real gift is that it is through this humble search for forgiveness that we find the opportunity for real healing in a fractured, skeptical world. -- Christian Piatt, author of *Post-Christian* and *Blood Doctrine*  
In this book a very promising evangelical future is embodied: humble, honest, repentant, post-WASP, post-patriarchal. Evangelical sins are skewered; American (and Christian) history is recounted in terrifyingly unsentimental terms. The contrast between this kind of evangelicalism and that of the reactionary right is staggering. A must-read book. -- David P. Gushee, Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics Director, Center for Theology and Public Life, Mercer University  
There is now a great deal of talk about the crisis in the church. Most of that talk is frivolous and too easy, propelled by manufactured solutions, business models, or cheap grace. Not here! These writers walk honestly into the failures of the church that has too long, too often, colluded with convenient exclusionary practices. This book is a recognition that serious forgiveness by God follows serious repentance. This is well-informed, highly disciplined theology applied to the lived realities of the church. -- Walter Brueggemann, Columbia Theological Seminary  
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MAE ELISE CANNON (M.A., Trinity International University; M.B.A., M.Div., North Park University) is senior director of Middle East advocacy and outreach for World Vision USA. A former pastor, Cannon is author of *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World*.  
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TROY JACKSON has served as pastor of University Christian Church in Cincinnati since 1994. He is the author of *Becoming King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Making of a National Leader* and editor of Volume VI: *Advocate of the Social Gospel in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project*. He has an M.Div. from Princeton University and a Ph.D. in American history from the University of Kentucky.  
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