



MERGE

the community we are meant to be

June 5th, 2016

The Reconciling Community

Embracing The Deeper & Truer Christ Story –
Knowing We Are Forgiven In Christ Heals Us So That
We, Too, Can Be Healers

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. – 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (ESV)

Jesus' Great Lesson on the Spirit of Forgiveness

1. It Cannot Be MEASURED.

Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!" – Matthew 18:21-22 (NLT)

2. It is Based on God's Own MEASURELESS GRACE.

"Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. ²⁴In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. ²⁵He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. ²⁶"But the man fell down before his master and begged him, 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.' ²⁷Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.

– Matthew 18:23-27 (NLT)

The Forgiveness of The Master

- a) FILLED WITH PITY
- b) RELEASED HIM
- c) FORGAVE HIS DEBT

3. It Takes Having a TRANSFORMED HEART.

“But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. ²⁹“His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. ³⁰But his creditor wouldn’t wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full. ³¹“When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. ³²Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. ³⁵“That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.” – Matthew 18:28-35 (NLT)

4. It Values RELATIONSHIPS.

“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. ¹⁶But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector. – Matthew 18:15-17 (NLT)

- THE “JUST AS” PATTERN
Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. – Colossians 3:13 (NRSV)
- THE “IN CHRIST” POWER
Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. – Ephesians 4:32 (NRSV)

I Will Merge by...

- Memorizing 2 Corinthians 5:19.
- Bringing Christ’s message of reconciliation to the world.
- Letting the spirit of forgiveness work in my church through me.
- Giving my life to Jesus as Savior and Lord, for the first time.

WALK THE TALK

A Growth Group Guide

1. Have you ever seen someone forgive the person that so deeply wounded them in some real way (like Stan in the sermon this week)? How did that affect you? How did that inspire you?
2. Too often, we embrace the false narrative that says, “only when we forgive will we be forgiven and healed,” when the true narrative is, “only when we KNOW we have been forgiven will we find healing and become able to forgive.” As a group, discuss your comfort or discomfort with these ideas. Where do you agree or disagree?
3. Reread Matthew 18:21-35. Who do you most identify with in Jesus’ story of forgiveness? Explain why you picked that person.
4. Of the four points in the outline above, which one really spoke to you the strongest?
5. How has the “Just As” Pattern and the “In Christ” Power of Colossians 3:13 and Ephesians 4:32 helped you to see that forgiveness is not something we generate from our own willpower?
6. Have you ever confessed your own sin to someone else and had them affirm God’s forgiveness over you? How did that change your life?

SOUL TRAINING – EXPERIENCING RECONCILIATION

A Personal Transformation Exercise

The Principle:

Reconciliation and forgiveness can be made real in our lives through practices that embed the story of Jesus into our lives.

The Plan:

This week, the plan is to choose one of three exercises, all aimed at making reconciliation and forgiveness evident in our lives.

Allowing others to forgive FOR you - Identify the person you would like to forgive but are not quite ready to forgive. Choose a close friend who is a Christ-follower and ask them to pray for you and the other person. A friend can lift the burden off your shoulders and help you, when you allow them to come alongside you in prayer.

Steps to forgiving someone who has hurt you –

- *Identity*: The key to forgiveness is an awareness of your own forgiveness. This will entail deep reflection on Bible passages that announce your forgiveness. Either memorize or meditate on the following passage – “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

- *Perspective*: It is helpful to pray for the person you are trying to forgive. This usually helps us to get a new awareness of the person and his or her situation.

Get a New Perspective on the Lord’s Supper (Communion) -

Approach this means of grace with new eyes. The center of the Lord’s Supper is the reminder that Christ has reconciled the world to himself. L. Gregory Jones puts it this way: “Christ’s sacrifice relocates our lives as forgiven betrayers, as reconciled sinners, in communities of broken yet restored communion.” Reflect on these wonderful truths as you partake: Jesus is relocating your life, re-narrating your life, and this meal is a tangible experience of that.