

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday July 29, 2018 "Relationship Series: An Awkward Blessing".

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message on Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still go thru it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B. Sunday's Message.

So far in our "This is Us" series we've covered the topics of; "What is family?", "What to do when we discover the flaws in our family", "How to know when to ask for help", and last week "Caring confrontation". All of these are so important in making ALL of those relationships in our lives healthier and stronger. And relationships include our family, coworkers, neighbors, and even the community we call 'church'. You can go back and review the message and the notes for each one of those topics on our website or thru the NCC app.

Sunday we wrapped the series up with what most older couples will tell you is one of the most important aspects of healthy relationships. And that's the continual practice of radical forgiveness. We talk about forgiveness a lot in church, but when you look at the final teachings of Jesus you see him highlight three primary spiritual truths. **Live as one in unity, walk with humility, and practice radical forgiveness.** Above all of the traits of a being a follower of Jesus, it's these three that reflect the heart of Jesus and are so key in healthy relationships.

So...let's get a feeling for how you view 'radical forgiveness'.

What does forgiveness mean to you? How do you define it?

There is no doubt that true forgiveness is so difficult. What makes it so hard to practice?

Scripture.

Sunday's scripture surrounded the story of Jacob and Esau which is found in Genesis chapters 25-33. It's a long and convoluted story of deceit, trickery, hurt, and eventual forgiveness offered and accepted. But the key passage used is **Genesis 27:38-40** foreshadowing Esau's future of being released from the chains, "yoke", of bitterness thru the act of forgiveness.

Read this brief conversation between Esau and his father Isaac, then we'll unpack it some.

Pastor Lamar gave us some very succinct thoughts to help us develop a healthy understanding of true forgiveness. We'll highlight each one and then prompt with some questions.

Reflect on each of these.

1. "You can't move what you won't mention".

We're avoiders and seek comfort. And often we let unhealthy things fester because we don't deal with them. There is power in naming those hurts specifically, and the path to freedom goes thru your pain. The last two week's messages covering; "what we don't know" and "confronting others", reminded us true forgiveness only comes from bringing those hurts and the history out into the light.

Like Jesus, we have to choose **RESURRECTION over RESUSCITATION**. That means we have to go THRU the hurt rather than be pulled from it.

What does it look like to 'go thru your pain' in a healthy and productive manner?

2. "Don't allow what you've lost to limit your life".

Relational losses can create such barriers and holes. There are huge chunks of 'us' that are still 'attached' to other people, and we have to acknowledge those losses and then let them go.

How can holding onto unforgiveness, bitterness, limit your life?

What are unhealthy, and then healthy ways to process loss?

Lamar also reminded us that; ***"Reversing always leads to revenge rather than reconciliation"***.

Reversing is attempting to make the relationship just like it was before the hurt. Sometimes this is ignoring the hurt or even worse, thinking that revenge or making them pay will satisfy that pain.

We were challenged to remember: ***"We cannot make others pay for their sins against us"***.

The truth about revenge is since it is a negative motivator there is no 'enough' that satisfies you.

Because your hurt is so big, you will never feel like the other person has hurt like you do.

3. "Forgiveness is Not the reduction of responsibility or the removal of consequence".

We know intellectually the act of forgiveness has nothing to do with the other person, but forgiving well releases you from the chains of that hurt, and protects you from growing bitterness. Often we don't forgive because it 'feels' like we're letting the other person off the hook. It can feel like they are getting away with whatever it is they did to us.

It is not our responsibility or role to bring consequences for another person's actions. We can only be responsible for how we respond and live into our future, and the healing of our hurt.

This is so difficult to do, so how do you do separate forgiveness from consequences?

How can we keep from focusing on making sure the other person 'gets what's coming to them', and work on your own ability to let go and move on?

Lamar finished by saying- forgiveness is hard work, but it's a choice to give yourself the gift of moving on. And it's an absolutely essential part of any relationship...especially the ones closest to us. We have to learn to do this well. For our own sake, our emotional and spiritual health, but also because it reflects the heart of God, the work of Jesus reconciling the world back to God.