

Friends – Episode 5: The one with three words

June 18, 2023 – Father's Day

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BIG IDEA – Three words will change your life and restore civility.

scripture focus - “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” **Philippians 2:5-8 NIV**

In the words of Mark Batterson, Pastor at National Community Church in Washington, D.C., “The best predictor of success in life, in love, and in leadership is your proficiency at please, sorry and thanks. Those three words are the foundation of all healthy relationships and successful careers. Those three words are the only ceiling on achieving your dreams. Those three words will determine how happy you are.”

These three magic words are the key to healthy relationships and successful careers. Nothing opens doors like a genuine “**please.**” Nothing **resolves conflict** like a **sincere apology.** Nothing **incurs favor** like heartfelt **gratitude.**

These three words demonstrate a practical way for us to practice a passage out of one of Paul's letters to a church.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians that Jesus is the model, the template for how we are to not just live our lives, but how we should see ourselves in comparison to others.

Philippians 2:5 NIV

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:”

Paul says, Jesus had it ALL, yet never used that to advance himself!

“Who, being in very nature God, **did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant**, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” **Philippians 2:6-8 NIV**

PLEASE

The word **please demonstrates a posture of humility**, and for a role model in humility, we need look no further than Jesus.

Please is setting aside your preferences.

Please is relinquishing your rights.

Please is giving others the upper hand.

Please is putting the ball in someone else's court.

Please is honoring others above yourself.

Using please isn't rocket science. It's as simple as the Golden Rule:

“Treat people the same way you want them to treat you.”

There are three keys to an effective please and doing all of them will help you make it effective!

1. YOUR PLEASE HAS TO BE PRECISE

You can't say please expecting carte blanche. Generally, **people don't write blank checks, nor do they ask for a Venmo payment without a comment.** Your please must be well defined. The more nuanced it is, the more meaningful it is.

Jesus had two interesting interactions where he asked someone what they wanted. One with a blind man named Bartimaeus? Jesus said, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51). The other was a physically challenged man who hadn't walked in 38 years, saying, "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6). That seems unnecessary, doesn't it? The answer is obvious— One wanted his sight, the other wanted to walk again. So why did Jesus ask?

For starters, most of us don't know what we want. If Jesus asked us this question point-blank, many of us would draw a blank! We need to be able to know exactly what we want when we ask.

When we say what we want in our own words, we own it. We have a better memory for things we've said out loud, things we've written down.

So, before you make an ask, figure out how to put into words what it is you really want—precisely.

2. YOUR PLEASE HAS TO BE TIMELY.

When we're going to say please, we should pick a time when it will make the most impact. Every child knows there's a good time to ask your parents for something you want and there is an awful time to ask. Siblings cringe when they see their brother or sister get it wrong!

Making a plan, honors the person and the whole purpose of asking please.

3. YOUR PLEASE HAS TO BE PERSONAL

Your please is only as powerful as it is personal. What I mean is, you have to infuse it with your personality. You have to make your please a unique expression of who you are.

I make it a point to ask in person whenever possible. A serious please loses impact when it's in a text, email or even a phone call. When I asked Robin's father if I could have the honor of marrying his eldest daughter, you bet I made it personal and I did it in person!

Personalize your please.

CONCLUSION When it's precise, timely, and personal, a please is delightful and refreshing. People are tired of cheap talk and slick marketing. Most want to be honored well invested ask.

SORRY

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.” **Matthew 5:23-24 NIV**

Apologizing for what you've done wrong opens the door to setting a relationship right.

We talked about this a couple weeks ago. Reconciliation is hard, but right. And, if you want to keep great friendships, zero out your enemy list and find forgiveness with God, you'll use this word often!

Each of us is a complex combination of adaptive strategies. **Most of us tend toward one of two strategies: aggression or regression.**

We either attack or retreat. But there is a better way, **the Jesus way. And it starts with sorry.**

Sorry is a “we” word.

It mends broken fences.

It builds bridges across relational divides.

It levels the playing field.

But it has to pass a twofold litmus test: It has to be specific, and it has to be sincere.

1. IT HAS TO BE SPECIFIC

Have you ever tried to end an argument by saying sorry even though you had no idea what you were sorry for? Probably we've all been there.

Let's be real, though: That's an empty apology. Why? If you don't know what you're sorry for, you'll do it all over again. It doesn't pass the specificity test. And **don't be surprised if a foggy confession leads to a foggy sense of forgiveness.**

Ah, but a clear confession will result in a fresh & clean sense of forgiveness. If you don't get to the root issue, you'll be confessing the same symptoms over and over again.

It is just like our confessions before God - they have to be specific! And, when our “sorries” are clear, God's mercies are brand new, matching the clarity of our repentance!

The writer of Lamentations said that God's mercies are “new every morning” (3:23). The Hebrew word for “new” is hadas. It doesn't just mean “new” as in “again and again,” which would be amazing in and of itself. It means “new” as in “different.” It means “never experienced before.”

Today's mercy is different from yesterday's mercy! Like snowflakes, God's mercy never crystallizes the same way twice. Every act of mercy is unique.

2. IT HAS TO BE SINCERE

Along with the specificity test, every sorry has to pass the sincerity test. If you do the right thing for the wrong reasons, it doesn't count in the kingdom of God. Ultimately, God judges the motives of our hearts.

An apology will be effective only if you genuinely mean it. You have to check your motives. Are you trying to get something off your chest? Or do you have the other person's best interests at heart?

An insincere apology compounds the fracture. You have to say what you mean and mean what you say. That said, a sincere sorry can move mountains of pain, shame, and regret.

How do you know if your apology is sincere? Maybe one way is that your sense of regret and remorse over what you did is so real that you cry over it, or at least feel like crying.

Nothing says sorry like tears.
Nothing reconciles relationships like tears.
Nothing moves the heart of God like tears.

Try tears!

CONCLUSION Today, everybody is blaming everybody else for almost everything. There is no simple solution, but there is a simple word. **The word sorry is a good place to start.** Sorry maybe the solution to a thousand problems.

THANKS

The key to a life of flourishing is cultivating an attitude of gratitude.

Sadly, most of us don't say thanks enough, even when we have very good reasons for being grateful. Jesus Himself encountered this problem.

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

"One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." Luke 17:15-19 NIV

A ten percent return on gratefulness?

All ten of the lepers were healed of their physical ailment, but only one of them was healed of something much worse—ingratitude. It was that one leper who doubled back to Jesus, fell at His feet, and said thanks!

You can't control your circumstances, but you can control your response. Gratitude is the difference between bitter and better.

Gratitude begins with praise and thanks for God. Flowing out of that comes gratitude toward others.

1. THANK GOD FOR EVERYTHING ALL THE TIME

J. I. Packer wrote more than fifty books, including the all-time classic *Knowing God*. He also taught theology at Regent College in Vancouver, Canada, for almost four decades.

“The purpose of theology,” said J. I. Packer, “is doxology.” Full stop.

Packer started every class by singing the doxology. **Theology is the study of God, but the goal isn't knowledge. The goal is worship!**

Theology that doesn't lead to doxology is spiritual constipation.

Most of us are educated way beyond the level of our obedience already. We don't need to know more; we need to do more with what we know! Or maybe I should say, we need to worship more with what we know!

The biblical writer John, after receiving a glimpse of the future, reported,

I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13)

God deserves our praise every second of every minute of every hour of every day!

2. THANK ALL THOSE WHO HELP YOU ALONG THE WAY

A. J. Jacobs, in his book titled *Thanks a Thousand*, tells how he decided to thank every person who made his morning cup of coffee possible. And no, he didn't just mean the barista who pulls shots or makes French press coffee. There is quite a supply chain behind every cup of coffee, which starts with coffee farmers but also includes truck drivers, warehouse supervisors, forklift operators,

and coffee roasters. **Jacobs ended up thanking at least 964 people!**

Gratitude is the gift that keeps on giving! And most good memories, like stories, get better with age. Sometimes a single thank you isn't sufficient.

What if we made it our mission to thank every person who has directly or indirectly affected our lives in a positive way? I know—it would take the rest of our lives to do so! And some people might be hard to track down, like the doctor and nurses who welcomed you into the world.

Try picking a few people today to prime the pump and say thanks? Then, now that we know the power of this word – thanks, how about saying it and writing it more often!

Today, what are you moved to praise God for?
What person in your life do you owe a debt of thanks to?
What are you waiting for? Be like the tenth leper and say thanks.

How do we cultivate intimate relationships?
How do we make amends for the mistakes we've made?
How do we overcome trauma?
How do we find true happiness?
How do we shift the atmosphere at home?
How do we change the culture at work?

How do we revive a new civility in our neighborhood and our nation?

We get really good at please, sorry, and thanks!

I plan on making these three words a part of my everyday life. Will you join with me and hold me accountable to practicing these words?

I want work on having more **humble, apologetic and grateful conversations depending on the circumstances.**

To help me not feel alone in this, could I ask the men in the room to stand and join me in this journey going forward – PLEASE. I would love for us to lead the way and just use our words more gracefully and effectively with our families, friends and co-workers.

NOTES

Scriptures

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” **Philippians 2:5-8 NIV**

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Questions

- Q: Do you remember your parents prompting you to use these words?
- Q: How do you see these words to help cultivate intimate relationships?
- Q: Have you seen or experienced a lack of these words in our culture?
- Q: Could you share a story about that experience?
- Q: Do you make it a practice to say “please” when appropriate?
- Q: Are you comfortable with saying “sorry” when you’re wrong?
- Q: Do you believe saying “Thanks” helps generate gratitude in us?

COMMENTARY REFERENCES

Strong's Concordance

Philippians 2:5 5426 mind/attitude phronéō (from 5424 /phrén, "the midriff or **diaphragm**; the parts around the heart," J. Thayer) – properly, regulate (moderate) from within, as inner-perspective shows itself in corresponding, outward behavior. (phronéō) essentially equates to personal opinion fleshing itself out in action (see J. Thayer). **This idea is difficult to translate into English because it combines the visceral and cognitive aspects of thinking.**

Philippians 2:6 725 grasped harpagmós – to seize, especially by an open display of force. Stolen or robbed.

Elliott's Commentary for English Readers

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupt communication . . .—The word rendered "corrupt," is a strong word, signifying "rotten"; used in [Matthew 7:17-18](#), and elsewhere in the literal sense, here alone in the metaphorical. By the corrupt word, probably, here is meant especially the foul word, which is rotten in itself, and spreads rottenness in others.

Benson Commentary

Ephesians 4:29

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Ephesians 4:29

(1) that such obscene and filthy conversation prevailed everywhere, and does still among the pagan. So general is this, that at almost every missionary station it has been found that the common conversation is so corrupt and defiling that missionaries have felt it necessary to send their children home to be educated, in order to secure them from the contaminating influence of those around them.

Faithlife Study Bible

Philippians 2:6: something to be grasped The Greek word used here, **harpagmos**, is difficult to interpret because it appears only here in the Bible. It

seems to mean “**robbery**” or “**something to be seized by force.**” Paul may be saying that Christ did not consider equality with God, which He already possessed, **something to be exploited for selfish gain**. Alternatively, Paul could be saying that Christ did not consider the **state of being equal to God to consist in acts of grasping and taking**. Either way, Paul’s emphasis is on Christ’s humble attitude and refusal to act selfishly despite His equality with God.

The Bible Exposition Commentary

Philippians 2:5–6 The “mind” of Christ means the “attitude” Christ exhibited. “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5, niv). After all, **outlook determines outcome**. If the outlook is selfish, the actions will be divisive and destructive. James says the same thing (see James 4:1–10).

Certainly as God, Jesus Christ did not need anything! He had all the glory and praise of heaven. With the Father and the Spirit, He reigned over the universe. But Philippians 2:6 states an amazing fact: **He did not consider His equality with God as “something selfishly to be held on to.” Jesus did not think of Himself; He thought of others**. His outlook (or attitude) was that of unselfish concern for others. **This is “the mind of Christ,” an attitude that says, “I cannot keep my privileges for myself, I must use them for others; and to do this, I will gladly lay them aside and pay whatever price is necessary.”**

Great leadership story and principle!

A reporter was interviewing a successful job counselor who had placed hundreds of workers in their vocations quite happily. **When asked the secret of his success, the man replied: “If you want to find out what a worker is really like, don’t give him responsibilities—give him privileges**. Most people can handle responsibilities if you pay them enough, but it takes a real leader to handle privileges. **A leader will use his privileges to help others and build the organization; a lesser man will use privileges to promote himself.” Jesus used His heavenly privileges for the sake of others—for our sake.**

Outline:

He Thinks of Others, Not Himself
He Serves
He Sacrifices
He Glorifies God

Internet Links

[Please, Sorry, Thanks Chapter One](#) – Mark Batterson