

An Other Regarding Ethic

WEEK 4 VERSES:

Matthew 6:14-15 Matthew 5:38-39 Galatians 5:22-23 Matthew 6:12 Matthew 18:21-22

WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT GOD'S FORGIVENESS OF ME & WHERE I FEEL LED TO EXTEND/SEEK FORGIVENESS TO/FROM OTHERS... This week's message explores how Christianity introduces an ethic that challenges our innate self-centeredness. Because of who Jesus is and how He has loved us, we are compelled to sacrificially love others. We go from self-regarding to self-giving as followers of Jesus. It's understandable, then, that forgiveness would be especially difficult for a self-regarding people. Because we have been transformed by the grace of Jesus, however, we are empowered to forgive others and reflect the love of God. It is because of God that we can truly love others and even love forgiveness, even though it is costly.

Vertical

- How has Jesus demonstrated regard for others?
- How has Jesus transformed your view of yourself?
- How has Jesus given you honor?
- What does it mean to be pardoned by God?

Internal

- Who is at the center of your decisions God, yourself, or others?
- What does Matthew 6:15 show us about our repentance?
- What is the most difficult part for you when it comes to loving sacrificially?
- How are joy and love, as fruits of the Spirit, related?

Horizontal

- How are self-regarding forgiveness and other regarding forgiveness different?
- How does the cross transform your view of others?
- How is God specifically leading you to love those in your life right now?

Action Steps

- Spend time thanking God for His sacrificial, loving nature and reflecting on His love for you.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you "wound others in passing"—in big and small ways.
- Repent of the ways you live for yourself—what are some specific things you can do for others to reflect God's love?
- Review and work through this week's additional resource: "How do you know if you need reconciliation?"

RESOURCE: HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU NEED RECONCILIATION?

Here are seven signs (or levels) that show the progression of relational rupture in our hearts:

- 1. You roll your eyes inside and think: "You idiot. What a mess you are." When there is no sadness or sympathy, but instead, disdain and sneering...that is the beginning of a relationship going bad and your heart hardening.
- **2.** You hear about the person having a problem, and it is very satisfying. You realize you have tied your happiness to their unhappiness, and that is a terrible sign.
- **3.** You start to find most things they do irritating. You realize that something that person did is irritating or infuriating, but you would overlook it if someone else did it.
- 4. You start to feel awkwardness in the relationship. The awkwardness might come from just one side or both sides. Awkwardness is a sense of unease when around each other.
- 5. You start avoiding the person. This can mean avoiding places you know they will be or, when in the same place, taking pains to not have to meet or talk.
- 6. You get a chance to pass along negative information about the person and enjoy it.
- 7. You are hardly speaking to each other, and there is a lot of very obvious friction that others can see.

Know the difference between a reconciled and an unreconciled relationship.

An unreconciled relationship is one in which you see (a) avoidance, (b) coldness, or (c) irritability (i.e., the same action performed by another person does not disturb you as much as it does when this person does it)! If you find yourself avoiding or being cold to, or very irritated with, the other person (or if you can tell the other person is cold or irritable or avoiding you), then you probably have an unreconciled relationship.

On the other hand, "I forgive you" does *not* mean "I trust you." Some people think they haven't reconciled until they can completely re-trust the person who did the wrong. That is not the case. Forgiveness means a willingness to *try* to reestablish trust, but that reestablishment is always a process. The speed and degree of this restoration entails the re-creation of trust, and that takes time, depending on the nature and severity of the offenses involved. Until a person shows evidence of true change, we *should not* trust the person. To immediately re-trust a person with sinful habits could actually be enabling them to sin.

Trust must be restored, and the speed at which this occurs depends on the behavior. Just because you don't (and shouldn't) trust a person who wronged you as you did before doesn't mean you don't have a reconciled relationship with him or her.

Adapted from Tim Keller's Forgive

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