



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 18:15-35

KEY POINT: A disciple of Jesus is one who not only pursues forgiveness, but also refuses to withhold it.

FOR LEADERS

- Weekly Resources: As a reminder, the weekly resources (discussion guides, group videos, podcasts, etc.) are posted for you each week both on the Realm Leader's Group, as well as on our website at emergencenj.org/weeklyresources.
Boxes of Love: Boxes of Love are due! We have extended the deadline by one week, but please your group to bring their boxes back this week!!

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Communities Video: Watch this week's community extras video.
[2] Icebreaker: Name one critique that someone gave you that is forever implanted in your memory.
[3] Opener: How did your own personal study go in the workbook this week? Was there anything that you found particularly eye opening?

PEACEMAKERS

In our passage this week Jesus gives us the next characteristic of what should define a disciple of Christ, which is forgiveness. Not only does our passage this week give us a visual example with Jesus' parable, but it also harkens back to Jesus' earlier words in Matthew where he uses the term "peacemakers" as those who will inherit the Kingdom of God.

- [1] In your own words, how would you describe what it means to be a peacemaker?
[2] What is the difference between being a peacekeeper and a peacemaker?
[3] What are some ways that you've seen relationships fracture? How might peacemaking have been brought into the situation to better bring about reconciliation?
[4] Name a time where you personally were challenged to be a peacemaker. What do you think you navigated well, and what have you learned about navigating conflict as a result?

Leaders: The chief difference between peace "keeping" and peace "making" is that peacekeepers are most concerned with avoiding conflict whereas peacemakers are concerned with navigating conflict. Many, many relationships stumble over this very subtle difference, and we often fall victim to the trap of thinking that, just because we don't have any conflict, we are succeeding. In truth, conflicts that is navigated well actually builds trust.

PURSUING FORGIVENESS

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 18:15-20.

Here Jesus explains how God's people should pursue one another for reconciliation. The Church stays healthy not by becoming a community of perfection, but rather a community of forgiven people forgiving one another. This process, as Ryan pointed out, is considerably different than the typical response of gossip and holding grudges.

- [5] What exactly IS gossip, and why is it such a bad thing? How does Jesus' example of forgiveness differ from that of what we so often see in relationships today?

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- [6]** What are some of the more important Christian virtues to display when doing the hard work of confronting a brother and sister in Christ? How can we best communicate these virtues so that another person would see us coming to them in love rather than in an attack?
- [7]** In question 1 of the Going Deeper section of our book, we are asked about the advantages of bringing along one or two others when attempting to confront someone who has sinned against us. What are some of the advantages of this? When is this appropriate?
- [8]** Was there ever a time when you experienced what Jesus is talking about here, either as confronter or the one confronted? Was it a positive or negative experience and why?
- [9]** What is the best way to respond if someone attempts to confront you about sin, but you don't believe you're in the wrong?

Leaders: Remember that being a people which forgives one another does not mean ignoring sin. Jesus does not want us to simply sweep one another's sin under the carpet. Systems like that is nothing but a ticking time bomb waiting to explode. Rather, we need to do the hard work (and it is most certainly hard) of loving each another enough to pursue true forgiveness and reconciliation. The best way to respond if someone attempts to confront you about sin is to receive it, whether you believe you are in the wrong or not. Realize that we may unintentionally hurt people without ever even realizing it. And, if that's the case, what's the bigger issue? Justifying ourselves, or regaining our brother or sister? The most important thing to understand about forgiveness is that we do not forgive one another because of what the other person has or hasn't done; we forgive because our Lord has first forgiven us. Forgiveness is not so much a reflection of right or wrong, so much as it is a reflection of our relationship with Jesus.

GRANTING FORGIVENESS

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 18:21-35.

In the sermon this week, Ryan mentioned that forgiveness always requires a payment of a debt, and it's usually the one forgiving who is required to pay it. He went on to explain how forgiveness has less to do with right and wrong, so much as it has to do with an individual reflection of our relationship with Jesus.

- [10]** What does someone's willingness to forgive another reveal about their faith in Christ?
- [11]** This week we learned about some of the differences between forgiveness, reconciliation, and relationship. What were some of those differences, and how should we understand them?
- [12]** In the last verse of this week's passage, Jesus says that God wants us to forgive one another "from the heart." Practically, what does this mean?

Leaders: To put it simply, if you can't forgive another person for their offense(s) against you, then you probably aren't a Christian. What does your inability to forgive another's sins say about your own understanding of what you've been forgiven of? Moreover, there is a difference between forgiveness, reconciliation and relationship. Forgiveness has nothing to do with the other person, but rather your faith in God.

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that the Lord would give you love and wisdom to care enough to not ignore one another's sin. Pray also that God may grant you such a high view of the gospel that you would find it easy to look past offenses of those who wrong you.