

40 Weeks of Purpose

Week 20

Restoring Broken Fellowship

POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT FROM LAST WEEK:

Community requires Commitment.

It's not easy. That is the whole point. God wants us to grow through the process of learning to live with other imperfect humans.

We talked about Cultivating Community. Doing so requires a commitment to:

- 1) Honesty – Care enough to speak the Truth – But, don't be Rude!
- 2) Humility – Pride builds Walls – Humility builds Bridges
- 3) Courtesy – Community has nothing to do with Compatibility
- 4) Confidentiality – God hates Gossip – Gossip Destroys Fellowship
- 5) Frequency – You can't be best friends if you don't see each other

VERSE TO MEMORIZE FROM LAST WEEK:

• Ephesians 4:3 (NCV)

- 3) You are joined together with peace through the Spirit, so make every effort to continue together in this way.

It's going to require effort

QUESTION TO CONSIDER FROM LAST WEEK:

Which of the five areas of Cultivating Community do I need to work on the most?

You have to start somewhere... Pick one and go for it!

- Relationships are always worth restoring...
- Life is all about learning to love
- God wants us to value relationships and make the effort to maintain them, instead of discarding them when there is a conflict
- Reconciliation is one of our main goals in life

- Look at what Paul tells the Corinthians:

- 2nd Corinthians 5:17-19 (NIV)

- 17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
- 18) All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:
- 19) that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

- Remember what Christ told the Disciples?

- John 13:35 (NLT)

- 35) Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

- Part of our preaching, part of our mission, our goal in life as an Ecclesia is to be known by those around us as a body of people that truly, honestly, loves each other

- So, when there is broken fellowship, this is a disgrace to our body, and doesn't fulfill one of God's greatest desires for us

- We need to work for unity in our Ecclesia

- We need to work for peace

- We need to be Peacemakers

- Peacemaking is not avoiding conflict

- Running from problems, pretending they don't exist, or avoiding talking about them is cowardly, not peaceful

- Peacemaking is not appeasement

- Christ wasn't a doormat

- God is looking for people that always give in and allow others to run over them

- Restoring Fellowship is often a full time job

- Here are seven biblical steps to restoring Fellowship

1 - Talk to God BEFORE talking to the person

- Pray about the conflict instead of gossiping about it...

- You will often find that God resolves the problem immediately
- Give God the opportunity to change your heart, or the heart of the other person
- If you have to approach the person
 - Ask God to give you guidance and courage

2 - Always take the INITIATIVE

- It doesn't matter if you were offended or the one doing the offending
 - God expects you to make the first move
- Don't wait for them to come crawling to you, begging your apology
 - Even if they should!
- The relationship is more valuable than your pride or your sense of justice...
- Look at the importance Jesus puts on it:
- Matthew 5:23-24 MSG
 - 23) "This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you,
 - 24) abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God.
- Before you can Break Bread again, you have to take care of it...
- ***Schedule a face-to-face meeting as soon as possible***
 - No phone calls, no email, no letters, no instant-messaging...
- A successful meeting is rushed, or interrupted
 - Plan a time when you are both free, rested and ready to talk

3 - SYMPATHIZE with their feelings

- Use your ears more than your mouth
- Before attempting to solve any disagreement you must first listen to people's feelings

- Philippians 2:4 NIV

- 4) Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

- ***Focus first on feelings, and not facts***

- ***Begin with sympathy, not solutions***

- Don't try to talk people out of how they feel at first
 - Just listen without being defensive
- Feelings are not always true or logical
 - When people are upset they often act irrationally
- If you try to address them too soon, you will cause immediate resentment
- Be patient
- Patience comes from Wisdom, and Wisdom comes from being able to hear the perspective of others
- It's hard to patiently absorb the anger of someone else, especially if it's unfounded
 - You want to defend yourself and explain yourself
- But, wait...
- ***People don't care what you know, until they know that you care***

4 - CONFESS your part of the conflict

- ***If you really want to restore the relationship, then you should begin by admitting your own mistakes and sins***

- It's really easy to tell when you have done something wrong in a conflict...
 - It's usually predicated by those times you think,

"I don't know what I possibly could have done that would have caused them to act like this!"

- ***If you claim that you're free from sin, you're only fooling yourself...***

- Look closely... You'll find something
- Pray to God to show you how much of the problem is your fault

- Confession is a powerful tool for reconciliation
 - When you begin by humbly admitting your mistakes, it defuses the other person's anger
- Accept responsibility for your mistakes and ask for forgiveness

5 - Attack the problem, NOT the person

- ***“Fix the problem, not the blame”***

- Proverbs 15:1 MSG

1) A gentle response defuses anger, but a sharp tongue kindles a fire.

- In a conflict, **HOW** you say it, is as important as **WHAT** you say
- Too often how we handle a conflict causes a bigger problem than the original conflict
- Nagging never works. Period.
- You are persuasive if you are abrasive
- Never say anything that personally attacks the other person
 - ***You have committed a sin... NOT***
 - ***You are a sinner!***
- Other things to avoid:
 - Condemning – This is Reconciliation, it's Judgment
 - Belittling – You are not better than them
 - Comparing – All Comparisons are Odious
 - Labeling – Every person is more complex than any label
 - Insulting – Rude!
 - Condescending – Holier than Thou
 - Being Sarcastic - Maddening

6 - COOPERATE as much as possible

- Peace always has a price

- For the sake of fellowship do **WHATEVER** you can to compromise, adjust to others, and show preference to what they want
- Notice I said “Cooperate” not “Compromise”...
 - No one is asking you to deny the fundamentals of your faith
 - But, you are being asked to deny yourself that great feeling of proving yourself right
- Peace always has a price tag...
- Romans 12:18 (NLT)

18) Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible.

7 - Emphasize RECONCILIATION not resolution

- It's unrealistic to expect everyone to agree about everything
 - ***Reconciliation focuses on the relationship***
 - ***Resolution focuses on the problem***
- Focus on reconciliation, and the problem often becomes irrelevant
 - ***You don't have to resolve the issue...***
 - ***Just the relationship***

POINT TO MEDITATE ABOUT THIS WEEK:

Relationships are worth Restoring.

VERSE TO MEMORIZE THIS WEEK:

- Romans 12:18 (NLT)

Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible.

QUESTION TO CONSIDER THIS WEEK:

Who do I need to call this afternoon?