**Class 3**

**Confession Brings Freedom**

Last class we talked about **Trusting God**

That really is our best option, but it often is difficult

**God is Good** and **God Loves Us**

The hard part is that sometimes He shows His love to us by giving us hard challenges

 to help us become better people

God allows **Suffering** in our lives to teach us **Lessons**

We talked about **Attitudes** and **Behaviors** and how they affect **Conflict**

We looked at how **Conflicts** generally involve **Material Issues** and **Personal Issues**

Many Conflicts involve **BOTH**

Stopping our **Desires** from becoming our **Idols** is an important part of stopping the progression of sinfulness that leads to many **Conflicts**

This is the important first step in Conflict Resolution: **YOU!**

What steps can you take to ensure that **YOU** are not part of the problem

It’s much easier to fix yourself than someone else

**SLIDE**

That leads us to a discussion about **Confession**

**SLIDE**

Proverbs 28:13

 13) Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who

 **confesses** and forsakes them will obtain **mercy**.

God is very clear that reconciliation is important to him

Confession is a part of Reconciliation

**SLIDE**

Reconciliation actually involves four different parts and we’d like to talk about them

**SLIDE**

**Repentance** is the first step in gaining freedom from sin and conflict

The thing about Repentance that most people don’t realize is that Repentance is not

 something you can do yourself

We tend to think that Repentance is personal

We tend to think that Repentance is something we do

Repentance is not something that you can accomplish by self-determination or

 willpower

You can try! I know that I have!

Repentance is something that God gives us

Repentance is a gift of God for which we should pray

Look at what Paul told Timothy

**SLIDE**

2nd Timothy 2:24-26

 24) And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,

 25) correcting his opponents with gentleness. **God may perhaps grant them repentance** leading to a knowledge of the truth,

 26) and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Repentance doesn’t mean you feel sad or uncomfortable

Repentance doesn’t mean you simply apologize

**SLIDE**

Repentance literally means that you **change the way you think**

I like how modern versions use the term “coming to your senses”

It means that you have woken up to the fact that you have been deceiving yourself and that your ideas have been wrong

If this change in thinking is genuine, then it leads to a turning to God

Look what Isaiah says:

**SLIDE**

Isaiah 55:7

 7) let the wicked **forsake his way**, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let

 him **return to the LORD**, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Although repentance is often accompanied by sorrow, simply feeling bad doesn’t mean

 that you are repentant

Too often we get those things confused!

Many serial killers feel bad after killing someone - each and every time!

Look at the differences Paul mentions

**SLIDE**

2nd Corinthians 7:9-10

 9) As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

 10) For **godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death**.

**Whoa!**

I love that phrase! *“godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation* ***without***

 ***regret****”*

True repentance cleanses the soul

Being sad just makes you sad

Everyone feels sad when they get caught and have to suffer the unpleasant

 consequences of their actions

The problem is that that kind of sadness quickly dies away, and most people begin to

 behave just like did before

Instead of changing their thinking and their actions, they simply “try harder”

In contrast, real Repentance means that you feel bad because you have offended God

It means sincerely regretting the fact that what you did was wrong, regardless of

 whether or not you have to suffer the unpleasant consequences

- John told the people to *“produce fruit in keeping with repentance”*

- Paul told people that they should *“turn to God and prove their repentance by their*

 *deeds”*

**SLIDE**

- **Genuine Repentance** should lead to changed behavior

**SLIDE**

This requires you to **Examine Yourself**

A simple test of whether or not your Repentance is genuine, is whether or not you are willing to thoroughly examine yourself to uncover your sins

**SLIDE**

Sin is failing to do what God commands, or doing what God forbids

Sin is not simply an action that opposes an impersonal set of rules, but Sin is a rebellion against God

This is true even when our thoughts, words or actions are consciously directed against God himself

Even seemingly small wrongs against other people are serious is God’s eyes

You can even sin against God by doing nothing

**SLIDE**

James 4:17

 17) So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is **sin**.

Most people don’t like to admit that they have sinned, so we tend to conceal, deny or rationalize our wrongs

If we can’t cover up what we’ve done, we try to minimize it by saying that we simply made a “mistake” or an “error in judgment”

Another way to avoid responsibility for our sins is to shift the blame to others or say they made us act that way

When our sins are too obvious to ignore, we say something like this, *“Well, I know that I’m not perfect, and I admit that I am partially to blame for this problem, but they are more at fault than I am, so they should be the one to ask for forgiveness.”*

Of course, we are only kidding ourselves

Whenever we refuse to face up to our sins, we will eventually pay an unpleasant price

Consider David

**SLIDE**

Psalm 32:3-5

 3) For when I kept silent, my **bones wasted away** through my **groaning all day long**.

 4) For day and night **your hand was heavy upon me**; my **strength was dried up** as by the heat of summer.

 5) I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will **confess** my transgressions to the LORD,” and you **forgave** the iniquity of my sin.

If you are having a hard time identifying and confessing your sins, there are two things you can do:

**SLIDE**

1) Ask God to **help you see your sin** clearly

**SLIDE**

2) Ask a **spiritually mature** friend to **counsel** you

Don’t trust yourself to be objective in a conflict

If you weren’t blinded by your own sins, then you probably wouldn’t be in the conflict in the first place, so don’t think that you will be able to clearly see your involvement in the sin

As God opens your eyes to see how you have sinned, he also offers a way for you to find freedom from those sins

**SLIDE**

It is called **Confession**

Many people have never really experienced this kind of freedom because they have never really learned how to confess their sins honestly and unconditionally

Instead they say things like:

*- “I’m sorry if I hurt you”*

*- “Let’s just forget the past”*

*- “I suppose that I could have done a better job”*

*- “I guess it’s not all your fault”*

*- “Let’s just move on”*

It’s amazing how well we have gotten at not really confessing

My favorite was, “Mistakes were made, and I was involved.”

If you really want to learn to Confess, consider the **Seven A’s of Confession**

**SLIDE**

**1)** **ADDRESS** Everyone Involved

Confess to every person who has been directly affected your sin

Since all sins offend God, you should first confess to him

Whether a sin should be confessed to others, besides God, depends on whether it was a “Personal Sin” or a “Social Sin”

A “Personal Sin” takes place only in your heart, and is only between God and you

A “Social Sin” involves words or actions that actually affect other people, and should be confessed to all those who have been affected by it

**SLIDE**

**2)** **AVOID** If, But, and Maybe

The best way to ruin a confession is to use words that shift the blame to others or minimize your guilt

Saying, *“I’m sorry* ***if*** *I did something that upset you”* is not healthy, because by using the word “if” you imply that you do not know whether or not you actually did something wrong

What you are really saying is, *“Obviously you are upset about something. I don’t know what I could have possibly done wrong, but just to resolve this, I will give you a token apology.” - “By the way, since I don’t really know what I did wrong, then I certainly don’t know what I should do differently in the future, so it’s only a matter of time until I do it again.”*

Clearly, this isn’t a confession!

If your Confession contains words like, IF, BUT, PERHAPS, MAYBE, POSSIBLY, or I GUESS - then they aren’t really confessions

Remove those words and they are!

*- “I guess I was wrong when I said that” becomes “I WAS WRONG WHEN I SAID*

 *THAT”*

**SLIDE**

**3) ADMIT** Specifically

The more specific you are when making a confession, the more likely you are to receive a positive response

Being specific helps convince others that you are honestly facing up to what you have done

Being specific also helps you identify the behavior that you need to change

Being specific also means dealing with your attitudes as well as your actions

Conflict starts in the heart with unmet desires that give rise to sinful attitudes

If you explicitly identify your sinful attitudes as well as your words and actions, then others are far more likely to believe that you are genuinely repentant

**SLIDE**

**4) ACKNOWLEDGE** the Hurt

Make it a point to acknowledge and express sorrow for how you have hurt someone

You don’t have to dwell on their feelings, but if you acknowledge that you have hurt them, they will be more willing to move ahead with forgiving you

**SLIDE**

**5) ACCEPT** the Consequences

Don’t try to worm your way out of what’s coming

Actions bring about consequences, and often wrong accept bring painful consequences

Accept the consequences of your actions if you want to demonstrate genuine repentance

**SLIDE**

**6) ALTER** Your Behavior

Another sign of sincere repentance is to explain to the person you offended how you plan to alter your behavior in the future

Describe some of the attitude, character and behavior changes that you hope to make in your life

Acknowledge that you cannot change on your own and are depending on God’s help

Don’t be afraid to make a written plan for yourself of what you are going to change - listing some of your goals and objectives

**SLIDE**

**7) ASK** for Forgiveness

If you follow the six steps above, many people will readily say that they forgive you

If the person to whom you have confessed has not expressed forgiveness, at this point you can can ask *“Will you please forgive me?”*

Don’t use this question as a means to pressure someone into forgiving you - Some people can forgive quickly, and others need time to work through their feelings

Time alone doesn’t bring forgiveness

Forgiveness can be inhibited because a confession was inadequate

Not every confession requires all Seven Steps

But it’s good to consider all Seven when you need to confess

**SLIDE**

Let’s talk about Matthew 18

**SLIDE**

Matthew 18:15

 15) If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between **you and him alone**. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

Conflict presents unique opportunities to serve other people

Conflict presents the opportunity to show the love of Christ and to practice mercy and forgiveness

The most challenging way to help others in the midst of conflict is to help them see where they are wrong and need to change

Many offenses can and should be overlooked

But some problems are so harmful that they must be discussed

I’d like to discuss some basic guidelines on when and how to talk privately to another person about their contribution to a conflict

Too often we tend to think **ONLY** about Matthew 18:15 in regards to a conflict

Read only by itself, Matthew 18:15 seems to teach that you always have to use direct confrontation to force others to admit that they have sinned

If you read it in context, you’ll see that Jesus had something much more flexible in mind than simply going toe to toe with someone

Let’s look at the context:

**SLIDE**

Matthew 18:12-14

 12) What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?

 13) And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.

 14) So **it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish**.

Matthew 18:15 is introduced with a theme of restoration, not condemnation

Jesus says in verse 15 that the goal is to “gain your brother”

He continues with the restoration theme again when he continues with the parable of the Unmerciful Servant to remind us to be as merciful and forgiving as God is

**SLIDE**

Matthew 18:21-35

 21) Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I **forgive** him? As many as **seven times**?”

Let’s pause right there and give a shout out to Peter! Seven Times!?!

If that had been me, I would have been like, *“Fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me.”*

I can see myself going to Jesus with the **Three Strike Rule**

“Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as **THREE** times?”

So, let’s admit that Peter is a pretty spiritual guy to actually reach out as far as seven

 times

What Jesus says must have blown his mind…

**SLIDE**

 22) Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but **seventy-seven** times.

And Jesus launches into this Parable

**SLIDE**

 23) “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

 24) When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him **ten thousand talents**.

**SLIDE**

Wait… Pause right there…

Let’s get a grip on what he’s actually saying here

I love numbers, so I just had to work this out…

**SLIDE**

A **Denarius** is the equivalent of a days wages

**SLIDE**

The Average US Annual Income is $38,500

**SLIDE**

There are 220 Work Days in a Year

**SLIDE**

Our Average Daily Wage is about $175 a day

So, a **Denarius** is about **$175**

**SLIDE**

A **Talent** is **6000 Denari!**

What? Wait?

**SLIDE**

That’s about **$1 Million Dollars!**

**SLIDE**

**TEN THOUSAND** Talents is **$10 Billion Dollars!**

What?

Clearly the point here is that this was an amount that is **IMPOSSIBLE** to repay

**SLIDE**

 25) And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.

 26) So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and **I will pay you everything**.’

First of all, how do you lose $10 Billion Dollars?

And having lost it, it’s reasonable for the master to sell the servant and his family

Look at the servant’s response

Have patience! I’ll repay you!

Right.

I’ll just raise another $10 Billion Dollars

But look at the Master’s response…

**SLIDE**

 27) And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and **forgave him the debt**.

Wow!

That’s the equivalent of what we have been forgiven by Jesus

But…

**SLIDE**

 28) But when that **same servant** went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’

**SLIDE**

A **Denarius** is **$175**

**SLIDE**

**100 Denarii** is **$17,500**

Sure, that’s a LOT of money…

But this is the guy who was just forgiven **$10 BILLION!**

**SLIDE**

 29) So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’

 30) He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31) When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.

 32) Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! **I forgave you all that debt** because you pleaded with me.

**SLIDE**

 33) And **should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’**

 34) And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.

**SLIDE**

 35) So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not **forgive your brother from your heart**.”

Our goal is to help the person be restored to God

Although this sometimes requires direct confrontation, the Bible teaches better ways to approach people

The Bible rarely uses words like Confront, instead more often uses words like: Teach, Instruct, Correct, Warn, Encourage, Correct, Reason With, Show, Admonish, Rebuke

We are also warned not to let disagreements with others degenerate into Quarrels, Arguments or Controversies

God wants us to adjust the intensity of our communication to fit the other person’s position

The Bible also gives us many examples of approaching others indirectly instead of

 bluntly describing their wrongs

When Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman at the well, he didn’t directly confront her, he approached the issue indirectly by engaging her in assessing her own life

Jesus frequently used stories as a roundabout way to help people see their sins

Paul didn’t hit the men from Athens head on about their idolatry, instead he engaged them on a point of common interest and moved gradually to the one true God

Esther holds the record for the indirect approach, taking two days and two banquets to get to the point of telling the king about the injustice being done to her people

We need to let go of the idea that showing someone their fault always requires direct confrontation

Although that approach is appropriate in some circumstances, it shouldn’t be our first approach

And don’t try to resolve the issue in one meeting on Tuesday night at 7:30

It took quite a bit of time to get this bad, it’s going to take some time to correct it

Ask God to help us find the most effective way to approach a person in a way that

 opens them up for reconciliation

Then **KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN** for the opportunity that God provides

Another misunderstanding of Matthew 18 is to think that you have to meet personally

 with the person before you can involve others

The Bible gives us multiple examples of involving other people before trying to personally meet with someone

Abigail is praised for intervening between David and and Nabal

Joab helps out David when he is estranged from Absalom

Barnabas spoke to the apostles on Paul’s behalf and appealed for reconciliation

There are many biblically legitimate ways to approach someone with who we have a conflict

Personal conversations are often best, but in some cases involving other people right away might be better

Some examples:

When going to someone personally is likely to make them lose face in the sight of others

When you are dealing with someone from a culture where it is customary to resolve problems through others

When either party might feel intimidated by the other person, because of a difference in verbal skills or differing positions of authority

When one person was abused by the other, and the abuser will likely manipulate the person into silence

When there is a third party who has a much closer relationship than you do and is willing to help

Remember: These cases are RARE

The Bible teaches that a face-to-face meeting is usually essential to genuine reconciliation

**SLIDE**

This principle is presented in three ways in the Bible:

1) Most passages related to restoring relationships clearly contemplate a direct conversation

**SLIDE**

2) The Bible provides many examples of reconciliations that came about after a personal meeting

**SLIDE**

3) Scriptures also gives examples of disastrous results when the involvement of intermediaries avoided genuine confession and forgiveness

If you learn that someone is upset about you, then God wants you to take the initiative

Even if you don’t believe that you have done anything wrong

If you think that the other person’s complaints are unfounded or that the misunderstanding is entirely their fault, you still have to take the initiative

**SLIDE**

Matthew 5:23-24

 23) So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,

 24) leave your gift there before the altar and go. **First be reconciled to your brother**, and then come and offer your gift.

If you are honestly trying to examine yourself to find any sins that you might have so that you can deal with them...

**THEN** you should look for the opportunities to talk to others about what they think you may have done

**NOT** talking to others to try to get people on your side!

You shouldn’t be trying to defend yourself and assuming that their opinions of your actions are unfounded

You should have love and concern for your Brother’s well being...

Bitterness and anger are serious sins in God’s eyes

If your Brother is upset with you, then that can separate them from God

If you love them, you should help them get past those feelings so that they are rejoined to God

**SLIDE**

Ephesians 4:31-32

 31) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

 32) Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, as God in Christ forgave you.

This may require either confessing your faults, or helping them to see that there is no basis for the complaint

It probably will require patience and repeated attempts

God also commands us to go and talk to a person about a conflict if that person’s sins are too serious to overlook

**SLIDE**

Luke 17:3-4

 3) Pay attention to yourselves! **If your brother sins, rebuke him**, and **if he repents, forgive him**,

 4) and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

The hard part is determining if their sin is so serious that you need to talk about it

When do you simply overlook it, and when do you actually approach them about it?

**SLIDE**

Here are some guidelines:

Is it **Dishonoring God?**

When someone is behaving in such a way that others think less of God or His Word

Beware of this one…

It can become sort of a “Catch-All”

You can’t use this Carte Blanche

You really need to have evidence that others are being affected by the actions

This is probably the most misused of all of them

We are upset about what the person is doing because it has hurt us materially or

 personally – no matter how slightly

Instead of just overlooking their transgression we hype up an argument based on how this is “not befitting a servant of Christ” and go after them with our guns blazing

YES! There are times when you have to say something in order to protect holiness

But be sure that this is your only reason and your motives are pure

**SLIDE**

Is it **Damaging Your Relationship?**

If you are unable to forgive an offense - If your feelings, thoughts, words or actions towards the other person have been negative for a short period of time - then the offense is too serious to overlook

Even minor things can damage a relationship if they are repeated

**SLIDE**

Is it **Hurting Others?**

A disagreement is too serious to overlook when it results in significant harm to you or others

If they are setting an example that will encourage others to behave in a similar manner you should talk to them

When people start to take sides, and the Unity of the Ecclesia is threatened, then it needs dealing with

**SLIDE**

Is it **Hurting the Offender?**

Sin needs to be addressed when it is seriously harming the offender

Either by direct damage - Substance Abuse

Or by impairing their relationship with God

Don’t be fooled by the world’s view that everyone should be allowed to *“do their own thing as long as they don’t hurt anyone”*

**SLIDE**

James 5:19-20

 19) My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back,

 20) let him know that **whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death** and will cover a multitude of sins.

Even though it’s important to try to reach out to people, that doesn’t give us license to

 be a “busybody”

**SLIDE**

Busybody appears in four different verses in the Bible each one condemning it

Anyone who is **EAGER** to show a Brother his sin is probably disqualified from doing so

That is usually a sign of pride and that cripples your ability to minister effectively to others

At the other extreme are those who are unwilling to talk to others under any circumstances

These people point to Matthew 7

**SLIDE**

Matthew 7:1

 1) “**Judge not**, that you be not judged.

They forget to keep reading…

**SLIDE**

Matthew 7:5

 5) You hypocrite, **first take the log out of your own eye**, and then you will **see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye**.

Notice how verse 5 shows that if you follow Christ’s instructions, you will be able to

 *“see clearly to remove the speck from your Brother’s eye”*

We’re not supposed to just go around for the rest of our life with a log sticking out of

 our eye

We’re supposed to work on removing it, so that we can see clearly

We are not to seek vengeance against those who wrong us, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t address them

Galatians 6 really helps us see that clearly

**SLIDE**

Galatians 6:1

 1) Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should **restore him in a spirit of gentleness**. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Restore a Brother “Caught in a Sin”

The Greek Word for “caught” here often means “overtaken”

This is someone who is taken off guard

Their problem has become so serious that they may not be able to save themselves

We are told to “Restore Him Gently”

Next we’ll talk about doing that

Next class we’ll talk about *“Speaking the Truth in Love”*