

St Martins C3 – September 15, 2024

Between You And Me – Letting Go Of Offence

Sermon Summary:

God calls His people to live in unity, to be a community built around the love of Christ as it transforms our lives and the lives of those around us. As fallen people, we don't always live up to this standard and we hurt each other at times, even others within our church family. When we ourselves have been hurt, holding on to the offence in our hearts will lead to bitterness, decay and destruction – but the call of Christ on our lives is to learn to forgive. This forgiveness must first take place in our hearts as God helps us to let go of the offence.

Read Hebrews 12:14-15

Bitterness

When we harbour offence and avoid the work necessary to move through and beyond that offence, we allow the mould of bitterness to grow in our lives. Feeling offended is natural, it happens to us all, and people can hurt us in very deep ways. But we must take the time, “make every effort” as it says in Hebrews 12, to work through that offence. There are a few key steps to this process, the most important being prayer.

We must bring the offence before God and ask for His help. For wisdom to see what it was that really hurt us and why. For insight into how the person or situation that hurt us is affecting others – yes, even the one who hurt us. For peace, particularly between believers, and for the confidence to

trust Jesus' very clear commandment to forgive. We must remember that we ourselves have been forgiven and that ultimately God will be the one to judge us all.

Read Matthew 12:36-37

Something to avoid after being hurt by another is the natural desire to bring a third party into the situation by complaining and turning them against the offending party. Creating this kind of relational triangle is damaging to all those involved and is the very opposite of striving for peace and unity between believers. Seeking wise counsel and support is very important, but as Jesus says in Matthew, by your words you will be acquitted or condemned. Ask God to change your heart towards the person who offended you, so that you might not cause more division and hurt.

Read Luke 22:33-34

Jesus both taught us to forgive and gave us the perfect example. Even while hanging on the cross, experiencing the worst of mankind's torture, He demonstrated His love and prayed the famous prayer "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Being hurt is a natural part of life, and it feels very unnatural to let go of offence and even move towards forgiveness. Jesus is the perfect example of what it means to be human. His sacrifice brought forgiveness to our lives and made it possible for us too to forgive, so invite Him to work on your heart today.

Connect Group Material:

Key Point

When we are hurt by another person we need to let God work on our hearts to prevent bitterness from growing.

Questions

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

How many times should we forgive, is it 77, or 70x7?

Have you ever forgotten to clean up a mess and discovered it much later, much worse?

Have you ever avoided a mess that was your responsibility to deal with? What happened?

What is the most hurtful thing that someone has done to you that you would be happy to talk about? What about it stung the most?

Have you ever had to let go of an offence? What helped?

How have you seen offence and division hurt the body of Christ?

Is there something you are holding on to that your connect group could pray with you about?

Monday Devotion: Love and Freedom

Read Ephesians 4:21-5:2

Love brings freedom. It is its nature to do so. We often think of freedom as the ability to do what we want. We have lived with strict parents who said, “Do this, don’t do that,” and we couldn’t wait to get away and do whatever we wanted. But that is not freedom. Freedom is committing ourselves fully to the way of love.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4 that there are some old ways of doing life we need to let go of if we are to experience the freedom of a life filled with love.

The way we walk in love is by letting go of bitterness, rage, harsh words and slander. Love is about kindness and love is about letting go of hurt, love is about forgiveness!

We need to be people who love well, by letting go of the hurts we have against others. Forgiveness is the way of love. It is the way of freedom. As we release these things we truly can love others well.

Today, spend some time thinking about the people in your life who have hurt you. Ask God to give you the ability to walk in freedom by releasing those hurts.

Tuesday Devotion: Love Your Enemies

Read Matthew 5:38-48; Romans 12:14, 17-21; 1 Peter 2:21

Today's verses may be some of the most difficult in the Bible.

We live in a world that makes no apologies for a person's right to defend themselves by attacking others. Our world has an eat-or-be-eaten mindset. Many judge others as a matter of course, almost as though it is as normal as protecting yourself if someone tries to punch you.

However, the people of God are called to be dramatically different. Jesus (and later Paul) teaches his followers not to get revenge but to humbly not resist their evil. He tells them to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecute them.

For many in our world, even modern followers of Jesus, this is crazy advice and runs contrary to our feelings. We are challenged to follow the sacrifice of God who did so much for us. However, it is sacrificing for the sake of personal freedom and the sake of the relationship.

What if you chose to radically apply this command in your life? Give it a try for a week and see whether it makes a difference. We might be surprised by the change it makes, not just in others, but also in us.

Wednesday Devotion: Confronting Pain in Our Lives

Read Proverbs 18:19; 1 John 2:10-11

Offences have a powerful grip on our lives. If we let our anger towards others consume us then we are like a walled city or a person walking around in darkness.

Bitterness is the poison we swallow, hoping someone else will die.

We each need to confront the source of our pain. If we don't confront it, we bury it and carry it around as we blindly hurt others. Some people have buried their anger to such an extent that it has physical results in their lives. They carry tension and pain because of what they cannot let it go.

*The longer I live, the more I observe that carrying around anger is the most debilitating to the person who bears it.
Katherine Graham*

That is why forgiveness is so important. When we forgive someone we release someone (from our judgment), but we also release ourselves (from anger).

*I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.
Mother Teresa*

Today, choose to confront your anger and release it.

Thursday Devotion: Release the Anger

Read Matthew 5:21-26; 18:21-33

How do we know we haven't forgiven someone?

- You can't have a full relationship with someone.
- There is a person you don't get on with
- You avoid someone
- You feel someone doesn't like you
- You feel pain every time you think of someone

Ask yourself the question: "Am I hanging on to something against someone?"

Forgiveness is letting a person off a debt they owe me. It is releasing another from my judgment. It is giving up the right to be judge and jury and in my anger to get even.

Forgiveness is a condition for receiving God's forgiveness, it is not something you only do when you feel ready. We have been forgiven so much that our response is to forgive! As these verses say, we forgive because we are forgiven. We have to start somewhere.

One day a woman came to a Pastor and described the hurt her father had caused in her life. She said if she was honest, she didn't want to forgive him.

He told her that was okay, but the first step for her to get to was wanting to want to forgive. That requires a desire to make it right even if you don't know how. Why not begin there?

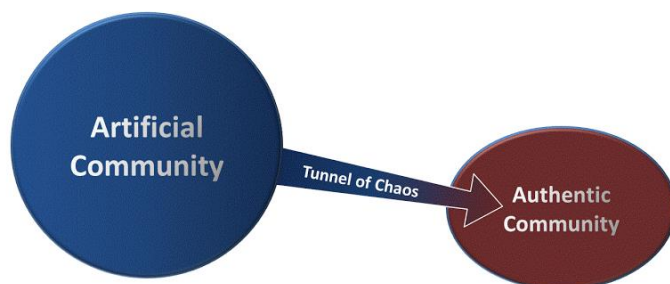
Friday Devotion: Tunnel of Chaos

Read Matthew 18:15-17; Proverbs 27:5-6

One barrier to relationships is clashes and disagreements. Whenever we have one of these clashes we have a simple choice:

- Give up on the relationship
- Not deal with it and accept a lesser relationship
- Deal with it and have a real relationship

To go deeper in a relationship often requires us to go through what Bill Hybels calls a “Tunnel of Chaos.” That is to bring up big issues with those who mean the most to us in the hope of moving from pseudo relationships to authentic relationships.



“You enter the tunnel when you choose to engage in crucial confrontations with a solid commitment to hold steady until you’ve reached a positive resolution and a deeper friendship.”

Think of your three most significant relationships. How often do you settle for some sort of pseudo-relationship? Today, commit to a new level of relationship by talking with each other about the barriers to an authentic relationship.