

TRAINING Disciples to Train

Session 13: Love One Another (6b)

Offered by Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. – BiblicalMentoring.org (Studies)

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **1 Corinthians 12:14**
14 "For the body does not consist of one member but of many".

Step 3: *Read and discuss all or part of the Bible Chapter – 1 Corinthians 12*

Step 4: Questions for Personal Applications and/or Group Discussions:

1. Consider how forgiving others verifies that you have been forgiven.
2. *Consider Phillips' statement – "You cannot receive God's forgiveness without giving it to others".*
3. *Do you realize that repressing pain instead of dealing with it through forgiveness can seriously jeopardize your emotional health, peace of God and the joy of the Christian life?*
4. *Do you realize that we are made in the image of God who is a community of three persons (Father, Son and Spirit). We are meant for intimacy in healthy relationships – in community.*
5. *Consider how the Holy Spirit uses the functioning of the human body as a visual aid to explain how Christians should relate to Christ and to each other.*

Step 5: *Read and discuss the Content from the book:*

Chapter 6b per the author – Keith Phillips:

Forgive Others

Once you have been forgiven, you must forgive others. Jesus taught, "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matthew 6:14,15). Christ's prayer reflects this vital union: "And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us..." (Luke 11:4). You forgive in gratitude to God for His forgiveness of you, not in order to earn your forgiveness. Forgiving others verifies that you have been forgiven.

You cannot receive God's forgiveness without giving it to others. When our boys were infants, the doctor told us that he could inoculate them for every disease except chicken pox. If they came in contact with a child who had this disease, they were bound to contract it themselves. Forgiveness is like chicken pox. If you have it, you will give it to others.

Forgiving others is a hallmark of the Christian faith. Jesus forgave us, for whose sins He was crucified, while He still hung on the cross (Luke 23:34). Stephen forgave those who were stoning him even as the rocks crushed his body (Acts 7:60). Paul summarizes the Christian position: "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Your forgiveness of others must be wholehearted, patterned after God's forgiveness of you.

Forgiving another person is a miracle of God. It is His work, not yours. Even with a willing heart, the pain is sometimes so severe that you simply cannot believe that forgiving and forgetting are possible. But because of God's forgiveness of you and the grace that He provides, you can forgive.

If you are hurt by someone but repress the pain instead of dealing with it through forgiveness, the guilt, bitterness and anxiety remain to aggravate the discord. This seriously jeopardizes your emotional health by dampening the peace of God and the joy of the Christian life. The negative emotions bottled inside eat away at you like a cancer.

Any failure to joyfully forgive others discloses an ignorance of God's gracious provision for you. You become like the ungrateful servant in Matthew 18:21-35, readily enjoying the release purchased by divine mercy, but cruelly denying similar grace to others.

Understandably, Pat Williams harbored hatred for her uncle and resentment for her mother. How could they have allowed a child to experience such perversion? Somehow Christ's teaching, "forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37 KJV) did not make much sense.

But when Pat fully accepted God's forgiveness, He replaced the piercing hurt and insidious guilt of her past with a deep security in His love. This produced a very delightful self-love. After experiencing such a perfect forgiveness, how could Pat do less than forgive her uncle and mother? Forgiving others is following Christ's example.

Accept the Forgiveness of Others

Colossians 3:13 urges us to forgive one another because Christ forgives us. Forgiving one another requires us to accept, as well as give, forgiveness. Accepting forgiveness usually follows our earnest request for forgiveness. However, sometimes people offer to forgive us for wrongs that we thought were so extreme that we did not even dare to ask for their forgiveness. We may find it hard to believe that they sincerely want to forgive us.

But when someone forgives you, you must be quick to accept. Failure to do this is sin. It indicates that you believe your offense against this person was so great that God's power is insufficient to enable him to forgive. It denies Christ's perfect atonement in his life. Not accepting a person's forgiveness will offend him and damage your relationship with him. It prolongs the hurt and division between you. Further, it might cause him to stumble in the future by withholding forgiveness from others, since your rejection could lead him to believe that it would not be accepted anyway.

One day Pat's uncle may accept God's forgiveness and learn that Pat has already forgiven him. He may, however, be so overwhelmed by the wretched nature of his sins against Pat that he feels unable to accept her forgiveness. But in obedience to God, he must.

Pat's uncle certainly knows about the resentment and bitterness Pat had against him. Were he to accept Pat's forgiveness and then to forgive Pat for her negative emotions, God would want Pat to joyfully accept his forgiveness.

While accepting forgiveness is important, your healing does not depend on another person's giving or accepting forgiveness. It is a result of God's perfect provision through Christ's atonement.

Accepting and giving forgiveness break down the walls which obstruct relationships. When there are no barriers between people, love for one another is the only remaining alternative.

Community

You cannot experience true Christianity in isolation. God Himself is a community of three persons, constantly interrelating in an intimate way. Since you were created in the image of God, the more closely you conform to the Godhead the more abundant your life will be. You can only realize the fullness of your humanity in healthy relationships.

Jesus recognized the necessity of relationships. His initial act of ministry was to call twelve men to "be with Him" (Mark 3:14). He formed a community. It was from this context that He taught His disciples how to maintain lasting and intimate relationships with both God and man: to love the Lord with all your heart—and your neighbor as yourself.

Community Is Your Primary Link With God

Christ is the Head of the body (Ephesians 1:22,23) and God is the Head of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3). If you are not part of a Christian body, you are outside of God's corporate, creative purpose for His people and you lose your most vital link with God.

The Holy Spirit repeatedly uses the functioning of the human body as a visual aid to explain how Christians should relate to Christ and to each other. Our understanding of Christian community is heightened by drawing parallels between the body of Christ and our physical body.

There has never been an instance of a foot being connected to a head apart from the body. It is a physical impossibility. Similarly, no Christian can have an exclusive attachment to God. "For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12:14). A believer relates to the Head through the body.

I will never forget watching a chicken rancher chop off the head of a chicken. When the head fell to the ground, the rest of the chicken ran frantically in circles. Dust flew. Feathers scattered. Then, suddenly, the body collapsed.

A Christian severed from the Head can appear to be alive for a while. But he will soon collapse because there is only one way to draw nourishment and direction from the Head—and that is to be part of a body (see Colossians 2:19 NIV). A Christian without community is like a chicken with its head cut off. Christian community is your primary lifeline to God.

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Step 6: *Share personal prayer requests then each person prays for the other's requests.*

Source: The Making of a Disciple by Dr. Keith Philips. Pub. by Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981. ISBN 0-8007-1181-5. Introduction by Robert E. Coleman. Content (except study questions) is taken from the book without revisions.

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