

Building Bridges Of Grace



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Session 1: Bridge Busters: Self-justification and Shame

What are the things that destroy connections with our friends, co-workers and family?
What are the underlying currents of our hearts that destroy good connections?

1. **Our deep need to justify ourselves is at the core of all relational disconnection.**

- a. Peter's life illustrates how our need to justify ourselves can get us in trouble relationally.
Galatians 2:12-16

Peter's sin-acting hypocritically-shaped by expectations of group he was with
causing others to stumble
racism
trying to justify himself
denying the gospel

The core of the gospel is justification by Christ alone! Living in line with the core of the Gospel means that your core identity is based on your justification by faith in Jesus Christ, not in your outward works-not by observing the law (vs.16).

Conflict: we are driven to protect our reputation, we have to look right or be right.
We are driven to justify ourselves.

- b. The Galatians had the same kind of heart struggles and it affected the whole church.
Galatians 6:11-14: "Those who want to make a good impression outwardly...do this to avoid being persecuted...May I never boast (find my identity) except in the cross."

(Gal. 1:10) The need for approval by men is a different gospel.
some results: boasting, blaming others

- c. Job shows the same heart motivation for which he must repent.
Job 40:8: "Would you condemn me to justify yourself?"

Core in my heart is to justify myself!
Job 31:35 Job demands an explanation because he is frustrated with God. He wants to take God to court. Job challenges God to defend himself.
What does God do? He gives Job more of himself by showing Job who He is...

It is an odd business: the more I live, the more I fail. The more I fail, fall forward, and am caught by the arms of grace, the more I reveal the message of the gospel. The more I pretend to have arrived and offer others advice on how they can do the same, the more I become like the prodigal's older brother, self righteous and angry. The ironic truth that those who proclaim the gospel need it more than those who hear it is not new. It just isn't being said loudly and clearly enough in this day of spin and professionalism and big programs." Dan Allender, Leading with a Limp.

2. **Our sense of shame leads us to have contempt and to hide from other.**

Psalm 34

**⁴ I sought the LORD , and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.**

**⁵ Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame**

What blocks our ability to love and forgive others? Some underlying currents in our hearts make it harder. We really have fearful hearts...fears like "what will people think?" and fears of people getting too close.

What makes us afraid? Shame. It is an emotion.

example of Adam and Eve:

created with no shame

when they believed the lie of the serpent, shame rushed in

relational intimacy has been changed by sin

sin-they felt it and hid

Shame comes from fear of being exposed or from being exposed. Shame requires the presence of another person--fear of that person seeing something about you that you did wrong or unwise/foolish.

How does shame function?

- it can be legitimate-if I sin and feel shame-it exposes my depravity and then it opens the door to repentance
- it can be illegitimate-when my dignity has been challenged

Hiding from shame produces withdrawal, isolation, aggression, anger, seduction, addictions to mask and numb the shame. Mostly the symptom is contempt.

Contempt is a way to draw people's eyes away from what they see. It is a diversionary tactic- Tom Clancy book... "look over there!"

- It can be directed at self- "Why am I so stupid?" focusing on self (self-protective)
- It can be directed at others- "Why are you so stupid?" putting the focus on someone/thing else (self-defensive)

Both are ways to stay in control...self-directed or other-directed. Neither opens the door to repentance because they are a way to cover up.

Operating out of shame puts us in self-protective modes and makes it hard to give or accept forgiveness.

Where is the door to repentance?

Jesus' own heart was free of shame, no need to cover up, and that shaped the way he interacted with people. He was free and open in relationships. This is what God has done for us: He has covered our shame with His perfect righteousness, that we might become like Jesus. When I feel shame, there is somewhere I can go with my shame!!! To the cross. Jesus endured our shame on the cross. I do not need to live with contemptuous cover-up.

Session 2: Reconnecting with those who have offended us: Growing in a lifestyle of forgiveness

What do I do when a bridge of trust has been broken?

How can I repair a broken connection when I don't trust the other person?

- We all have the desire to fix it. To make it right.
- The story that Jesus told:

Mt. 18:21-35 (NLT) At that point Peter got up the nerve to ask, 'Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?' Jesus replied, 'Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven.'

The kingdom of God is like a king who decided to square accounts with his servants. As he got under way, one servant was brought before him who had run up a debt of a hundred thousand dollars. He couldn't pay up, so the king ordered the man, along with his wife, children, and goods, to be auctioned off at the slave market. The poor wretch threw himself at the king's feet and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' Touched by his plea, the king let him off, erasing the debt.

The servant was no sooner out of the room when he came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him ten dollars. He seized him by the throat and demanded, 'Pay up. Now!'

The poor wretch threw himself down and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' But he wouldn't do it. He had him arrested and put in jail until the debt was paid. When the other servants saw this going on, they were outraged and brought a detailed report to the king.

The king summoned the man and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave your entire debt when you begged me for mercy. Shouldn't you be compelled to be merciful to your fellow servant who asked for mercy?' The king was furious and put the screws to the man until he paid back his entire debt. And that's exactly what my Father in heaven is going to do to each one of you who doesn't forgive unconditionally anyone who asks for mercy.'

- Take a few minutes and think of someone that I need to forgive: write down initials or some code name so that I am actually listening with someone in mind.
- Ruth Ann's story: her father getting sick and everyone praying for him, losing her father at age 10, grief, sexual abuse by uncle...

When we forgive we pay a price (we pay down the debt.) There is a cost to us. Forgiving is costly.

We have to acknowledge the extent of the debt.

- What was the debt the offender caused to Ruth Ann? Her innocence was stolen and replaced with shame: she grew up feeling dangerous because she thought she had somehow caused this to happen; her ability to trust was skewed-refused to trust, or trusted the untrustworthy; no sense of safety; fear; ideas of God were damaged and confused-who is God?; felt abandoned and alone.

We agree to pay down the debt ourselves rather than extract payment from the one who harmed us.

- Debt is costly.
- Debt has to be paid by someone.
- Either pay it yourself through forgiving or make the other pay
- What does extracting payment (making the other pay) look like? “I’ll get you back.” Being cold toward them, demanding, actively wanting harm, contempt, slicing up their reputation, rejoicing in their failure or in their suffering, gossip... adding to the list to prove the first wrong; self-righteous judgement and accusation; “I would never do that.”
- Paying down the debt myself by looking at my own heart- “How might I be like this person?”
 1. look at my heart
 2. confess-grieve-the currency of forgiveness is emotional pain-this hurts
 3. refuse to engage, indulge, dwell in fantasies-murder in our heart
 4. pray-not rejoice in failure
 5. release them to God’s mercy-process takes time

Our hearts tell us that unforgiveness is our friend, but scripture tells us that it is our worst enemy. It does not give us power but weakens us, making us vulnerable to spiritual enemies who wound and destroy. Unforgiveness does not protect us. It hardens our hearts to God and to others we love, thus keeping them at a distance and leaving us cold, lonely and afraid.”

Beth Hunter

“There is no use talking as if forgiveness were easy...I could say of a certain man, ‘Have I forgiven him for what he did that day? I’ve forgiven him more times than I can count.’ For we find the work of forgiveness has to be done over and over again. We mortify our resentment; a week later some chain of thought carries us back to the original offence and we discover the old resentment blazing away as if nothing had been done about it at all. We need to forgive our brother seventy times seven, not only for 490 offences, but for one offence.”

C.S.Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms

One cost of canceling the debt is that we revoke our right to vengeance.

- Vengeance can be powerful and sweet, like gossip. Our hearts leap at the thought of getting back.
- We may be called to pursue justice. Pursued out of a heart that knows forgiveness.
- Justice and vengeance are not the same. Justice is a concern for the other person and vengeance is a concern for self.
- How do we relinquish our right to revenge? One day there will be ultimate justice! 1Peter 2:21-24 ...committed his cause to the one who judges justly... I will trust God with this. Lord of the Rings... “is everything sad going to come untrue?”

There is also a cost when we refuse to forgive: the cost to us is bitterness.

“If you could lick my heart-it would poison you.” Holocaust survivor

- The unforgiving servant’s heart was bitter.

- My heart becomes angry, unforgiving, cold, hardened to God.
- There is a lot of energy in refusal to forgive. Who am I choking with my refusal to forgive?
- The servant's heart was untouched by the kindness of the king.
- Cycle of cynicism, contempt, criticism...I am comfortable and tight in this cycle...
- "I would never do that..."
- Bitterness blinds me and makes my heart a lethal weapon.
- It keeps me from seeing how I am like the one who harmed me. It allows me to feel superior and not to see my own great debt.
- Bitterness lands us in prison. Our wrath turns us into a wraith. Our inability to forgive turns us over to the torturers. Puts us into a place without passion.

Forgiveness is not:

- Forgiveness is not the same thing as denial. It is not minimizing the enormity of the harm- "It was an accident." Acknowledging the extent of the debt involves grief, pain, and loss.
- Forgiveness is not trying to feel good about something that is wrong or evil. It is not an absence of anger at sin. We are to face the evil and not whitewash the wrong.
- Forgiveness is not necessarily forgetting. You can't help remembering--we remember because we are made in the image of a God who remembers. When the memory comes back, will you ask Jesus to help you to forgive again and again? Trust God again--stay connected with Him.
- Forgiveness is not simply a one-time event. It is a process. Sin has long-term impact.
- Forgiveness is not conditional on another's repentance. Forgiveness is about my heart before God--it is God's calling. Offering forgiveness may lead to conviction and repentance or it may lead to a hardened heart.
- Forgiveness is not the same thing as reconciliation. Something has to also happen in the heart of the offender for reconciliation. (Samuel and Saul)

"But even when a person does not repent (Mt.18:17) we are commanded to love our enemy and pray for those who persecute us and do good to those who hate us (Luke 6:27). The difference is that when a person who wronged us does not repent with contrition and confession and conversion (turning from sin to righteousness) he/she cuts off the full work of forgiveness. We can still lay down our ill will, we can hand over our anger to God; we can seek to do him good, but we cannot carry through reconciliation or intimacy."

John Piper, *As We Forgive Our Debtors*

"We are not bound to trust an enemy; but we are bound to forgive him"

Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity*

How do we forgive?

- By the power of THE KING- the dead-raising King! God asks us to forgive--He asks us to do something impossible, gives us the power to do it, has it benefit us, and be wildly for His glory. The power to forgive is heart changing power.
- Am I a forgiver? Is my heart tender? Does my heart desire to forgive?
- Forgiveness begins at THE CROSS. Forgiveness is outrageous, startling, doesn't make sense. It requires a miraculous change. What really happened on the Cross?
- This change begins with WORSHIP. Worship is acknowledging that we are the unforgiving servant that can't pay and needs grace. Worship changes our perspective and is a return to sanity--reminding us that we are the creature and not the creator. I am like the one who I need to forgive.

- Forgiveness is giving others the grace that is given to us. We forgive because we have been forgiven.
- Forgiveness comes from a heart broken by the love of Jesus.

Forgiveness is showing God’s face to our enemies.

*“For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably.”
Gen. 33:10*

“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Matt. 6:12

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Colossians 3:13

“Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by his holiness; the nourishment of the mind with his truth; the purifying of imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart of his love; the surrender of will to his purpose – and all this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless purpose of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin. “

William Temple

QUOTES ON FORGIVENESS

“What if what God wants to give us is Himself? If we really believed that, it would be enough. In fact, it would be more than enough. It would overwhelm us.”

Craig Barnes, *Yearning*

“Forgiveness flounders when I exclude the enemy from the community of humans and I exclude myself from the community of sinners.”

Miroslav Volf

“Forgiveness is a beautiful word until you have something to forgive.”

C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

A definition of forgiveness from **Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity***

1. *Resisting revenge, Romans 12:9*
2. *Not returning evil for evil, I Thess. 5:15*
3. *Wishing them well, Luke 6:28l*
4. *Grieving at their calamities, Prov. 24:17*
5. *Praying for their welfare, Matt. 5:44*

6. Seeking reconciliation so far as it depends on you, Rom. 12:18

7. Coming to their aid in distress, Exodus23:4

“If forgiveness is a whitewashing of wrong, then it is itself wrong. Nothing that whitewashes evil can be good. It can be good only if it is redemption from the effects of evil, not a make-believing that the evil never happened.” **Louis Smedes, *Forgive and Forget***

“Resentment is bittersweet. If we did not cherish it, we would let it go. What sort of rewards do we get from our resentment? Why do we keep score? First, it makes us feel superior to the person we resent. Also, it gives us an excuse for indulging in exquisite plots for revenge, such as hurting the person by withholding our ultimate treasure - personal friendship...Third...we chew the cud of past wrongs to enjoy the feeling of hurt that memory kindles...There is a sense in which we remember past wounds to hurt ourselves. (Why?)...We feel noble and worthy as the decent person who was wrongly hurt. Resentments serve a double purpose: they give us treasured pain and they give us a chance to justify ourselves. So we get two rewards...neurotic pleasure and religious pain. But we do, in fact, also hate resentment...It depresses us, robs us of gratitude, and sneaks into other relationships.”

Lewis Smedes, *Love Within Limits*

“Love does not minimize or forget past harm. Christians are regularly (and wrongly, I believe) taught to ‘forgive and forget,’ to literally forget and no longer feel the pain of the past. God is said to have forgotten our sins (Jeremiah 31:34); therefore, we are told forgiveness equals forgetfulness. The Bible also tells us that God has removed our transgressions from us as far as the East is from the West (Psalm 103:12). Both are pictures of forgiveness - forgetfulness and distance - are metaphors that are not to be literally mimicked in our life. Imagine trying to find the spot where East and West are farthest apart to deposit another’s transgression against us. Literally forgetting the harm done to us would be as difficult as finding that geographical point. The only way to do so would be through unbiblical denial. Obviously, holding on to a memory for the purpose of demanding redress or justifying hateful distance is not biblical either. Biblical forgiveness, however, is not minimization or forgetfulness.”

Dan Allender, *The Wounded Heart*

Run John, run the law commands

But gives us neither feet nor hands

Far better news the gospel brings

It bids us fly and gives us wings.

John Bunyan

- 1. We continue to feel the psychological pain of the perceived offense.*
- 2. We perceive similar offenses by others who remind us of the offender.*
- 3. We give up our ability to choose and instead react in similar situations.*

We take added negativity into our present relationships.

We isolate/prevent/avoid/limit ourselves from having new, more healthy and more fulfilling relationships.

We become vulnerable to becoming spiteful, resentful and bitter.

We disrespect, distrust and devalue ourselves at deep levels of our heart.

We block ourselves spirituality from receiving help and healing from God.

Our own spirits and souls "shrivel up" more and more.

Larry Philip Nims, PhD., The Terrible Cost of Unforgiveness

Session 3: Reconnecting with those we have offended: Growing in a repentant attitude toward God and others

Learn about the power of humility.

What it is and isn't and how it brings health and good relational connections.

(Repentance is not so much about how do I do this right, but about what do I need to receive from God in this. How do I become a repentant person?)

SCRIPTURE CALL CHRISTIANS TO A LIFESTYLE OF REPENTANT FAITH. IT IS THE WAY WE MAKE PROGRESS IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

What does repentance have to do with how we grow as Christians? We think we grow by obedience/by obeying God's commands-yes & no-we grow by repentant faith-by letting law show me how much I need Jesus.

Jesus begins his ministry with the words: "Repent and believe the goods news." Mark 1:15.

- We begin our Christian life and are justified by repentant faith.

Faith is receiving. Believe the good news and receive God's mercies and riches given to us in Christ.

- We also grow in our Christian life and are sanctified by repentant faith.

When my heart is impatient and I make a choice to be patient, I need to repent of an impatient heart, not just congratulate myself on my obedience. Jesus didn't come to help me be patient, He came to change my heart into a patient heart...to transform me. Don't define my identity by my behavior.

- The same gospel that saves a sinner also sanctifies a saint.

Romans 1:16-17 The gospel is the power of God for salvation! It is the same gospel from first to last-it is righteousness applied once for all and every day. Everyday I need the application of the righteousness of Christ.

All through the gospels Jesus continually calls us to a lifestyle of repentant faith.

- "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23

Repent and Receive Lifestyle

- "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." John 12:24

Dying to self

- "So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him." Luke 17:3

Having an attitude of repentance in relationships-realizing I am a dangerous person when someone hurts me. I want to payback, take revenge.

On Jesus' last night before his arrest he calls his disciples to humble repentance.

Matthew 26:31-35:

31 Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: " 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' 32 But

after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." 33Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." 34"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." 35But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

- Why do you think Jesus told them this ahead of time?

Was he looking for them to resolve to do this?

- Resolutions have no power to change us, because what runs our hearts ruins our resolutions.

Our reputation runs our hearts.

- Jesus is calling us to a lifestyle of repentance not resolutions.

Jesus was calling them to be broken hearted-we are still like this after spending these years with you? My heart is still this way?

- Preventive repentance.

I am way worse than I thought I was. Yes-this is true of me...

- We have too much confidence in our active righteousness. Jesus wants us to thirst instead for his passive righteousness.

Key theologians point out this call to a lifestyle of repentant faith.

- Calvin spoke of the Christian life as a race of repentance.
- Martin Luther stated in the first of his 95 theses, "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ said repent, he meant that **the entire life of believers should be one of repentance.**"

"On the surface this looks a little bleak! Luther seems to be saying Christians will never be making much progress. But of course that wasn't Luther's point at all. He was saying that repentance is the way we make progress in the Christian life. Indeed, pervasive, all-of-life repentance is the best sign that we are growing deeply and rapidly into the character of Jesus." Tim Keller, All of Life is Repentance.

"We need to realize that while God's acceptance of each Christian believer is perfect from the start, our repentance always needs to be extended further as long as we are in this world. Repentance means turning from as much as you know of your sin to give as much as you know of yourself to as much as you know of your God, and as our knowledge grows at these three points so our practice of repentance has to be enlarged." J.I. Packer, Keep in Step with the Spirit.

REPENTANCE IS MORE THAN MAKING A DECISION TO CHANGE OUR BEHAVIOR AND THEN DOING IT. IT IS A CHANGE OF THE DIRECTION OF OUR HEART THAT COMES ABOUT BY A HUMBLE RETURN TO GOD AS HE WORKS IN US.

How can I get my heart to change direction? How can I become a repentant person? Jesus says that it is “out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.” Mt. 12:34.

We need to understand sin differently.

- Shark and fin illustration.

If we saw a piece of driftwood floating in the ocean near us, we would not be scared. But if we realized it was a shark fin, we would realize the danger and understand that there is so much more danger that we cannot see. Very often we treat sin as just what we can see.

- Fin management does not change a shark-like heart.

The fin is attached to something much more powerful. The energy is under the surface sin. What is feeding the shark? What is driving my heart? What is the shark hungry for? The sin is not something we need to stop, but something that is revealing/exposing something deeper...

- Sin needs to be understood for what it reveals rather than for what we are to stop.

*“The structure of sin in the human personality is something **far more complicated than the isolated acts and thoughts of deliberate disobedience** commonly designated by the word. In its biblical definition sin is much more... **complex: an organic network of compulsive attitudes, beliefs and behavior deeply rooted in our alienation from God.**” Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 88.*

We also need to understand repentance differently for it is difficult to define.

- Repentance is not so much about what you are doing to repent correctly, as it is about your attitude toward what God is doing to undo you.
- Letting God undo you means that he is the one in control.
- Focusing on what I need to do means that I am in control.
- Living repentantly with others is one way to help us not be in control and keep the focus on what God is doing.
- The gospel will advance much more powerfully into our hearts and into the hearts of others as we let God bring us greater brokenness by our willingness to die to ourselves.
- Ps. 51:17 tells us that the sacrifice God desires is a broken spirit and that he will not reject a broken and repentant heart.
- It causes us to wonder in what areas of our life we are resistant to allowing God to humble us?
- Am I allowing him to use the humiliating or difficult circumstances in my life?
- Am I allowing him to use other people’s comments and insights about me?
- Do I really desire the broken spirit that God desires for me?

It is a continual battle because we are not naturally self repentant people.

- We are self centered, self absorbed, self justifying, self righteous, self pitying.
- We are automatically self everything except self repentant.
- We resent more easily than we repent. Resentment causes us to miss the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15).
- Repentance is the key that opens the door to the grace of God and to intimacy with Jesus (Rev 3:19=20).
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Repentance is not a decision of the will to do right instead of wrong.

“It’s an internal shift in our perceived source of life. Ultimately repentance is a humble broken return to God, but there’s a catch. We are utterly unable to do it. Repentance is not something we can decide to do and then do it, it’s something God works in us. Then what’s our part? Our part is getting ourselves ready for God to work repentance in us. Before God can turn us, we have to become deeply dissatisfied with the way things are now. That’s where we’re hungry for change and hopeful that change is possible. When we find ourselves caught in a wrong behavior or attitude it’s pointless to merely decide to do better. But just leaving the ball in God’s court is to avoid our responsibility. Our job is to ask and keep asking this question, ‘what is blocking me from the desperate hunger to change and the excited hope that it can happen?’” Dan Allender, Wounded Heart Workbook.

GOD DESIRES THE CRY OF OUR HEART OVER OUR SIN, NOT SIMPLY OUR WAILING ABOUT IT. SINCE HE CALLS WAILING ABOUT OUR SIN A LIE, WE NEED TO LEARN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GODLY SORROW (CRYING) AND WORLDLY SORROW (WAILING).

“I long to redeem them but they speak lies against me. They do not cry out to me from their hearts but wail upon their beds.” Hosea 7: 13b-14a.

We need to learn the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. Discuss chart.

Examples of Judas and Saul/Samuel--full of self-pity and worldly sorrow.

Sorrow that is shallow and not real repentance

- Judas. He offered what seems like ‘the four steps of repentance’, including being “seized with remorse”. Matt 27:3-5. Esau sought the blessing with tears. Heb 12:17. Being sorry and even having tears are not the same as being repentant.

1. I am sorry 2. seized with remorse 3. I sinned 4. pay the money back

His real sin--contempt for Jesus...what was his heart like? adulterous, greedy, full of contempt=all in my heart, too.

- King Saul. He confessed some sin and even asked for forgiveness, but the prophet Samuel knew that these words were not about a broken heart, and so he rejected Saul’s so-called repentance. 1 Samuel 15:22-26

Puritans called it “halving your sin”--I’ll repent of the fin but not the shark!

- In each case they were going through what we might think are the correct steps of repentance, but they clearly were not repentant.

- Jonah. While he offered some words that sounded like repentance, he remained resentful and angry with God (yet God still used him to bring others to repentance!)
- Israelites. The way we usually apologize is not real repentance about our sin, but is rather a shallow apology that merely seeks to reduce our pain or change our circumstances. We prefer pain relief and easy reconciliation rather than dying to ourselves and repenting. Hosea 6:1-6.

Sorrow that is imperfect but headed in the right direction - Prodigal Son - Luke 15

- God honors our slightest move to return home even though it may come from having no other choice.
- Son returns home, but is returning as a slave—he isn't really sure of how his father will treat him.
- The father refuses to let his son shame himself and instead unleashes his love onto him.
- There is great celebration not condemnation!
- God will always take our imperfect repentances and embrace us with love and joy. (The gospel does not depend upon our perfect repentance).

Sorrow that comes from listening to someone and realizing the impact of our injustice and sin - Story of King David and Nathan – 2 Samuel 12:1- 14

- David had not repented even though it was one year later (this man after God's own heart!)
- We usually hope to get away with it - just as Joseph's brothers thought they had.
We don't want to be found out!
- Could God have brought David to repentance without sending Nathan?
Maybe, but He doesn't usually work like that.
- It is God's method to use the people in our life to bring us repentance.

Will I listen to the people that the Holy Spirit has put in my life? I don't know any governors, ministry leaders, etc. who have repented on their own. It takes exposure-"you are the man!" We don't repent on our own, usually...it is like we have to be forced into it.

- Just as it is his method to use people to take the gospel to the nations.
- We need someone to be used by the Holy Spirit to bring us brokenness and repentance.
- We are not self repentant people.
- We need to hear and feel the impact of our sin on people.

Reflection:

- What area of sin in your life have you been getting away with that you would like to be broken over?
- Where do you think you need to feel the impact of your sin more?
- Are you willing to let your spouse or close friend or someone be like Nathan in your life so that you can be cleansed?
What if you don't agree with the confrontation or criticism? There should still be a willingness to say I'm not sure about what you are saying, and then praying about it and opening the door for the process.

ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS IS NOT NECESSARILY REPENTANCE – IN FACT, IT USUALLY SHORT-CIRCUITS THE REPENTANCE PROCESS. IT IS MORE HELPFUL TO ASK FOR INSIGHT ABOUT YOUR IMPACT THAN TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS.

“Be careful, however, not to use this question (asking for forgiveness) as a means to pressure someone into forgiving you....If I press (my wife) to say “I forgive you” too quickly, I add to her burdens by introducing feelings of guilt, which can give rise to resentment and bitterness....Time alone will not always bring forgiveness. Sometimes forgiveness is inhibited because a confession was inadequate...”

Any time we use a process (like asking for forgiveness), we can turn it into a meaningless ritual and completely miss what God wants us to do....I have caught myself going through (this process) simply to get a burden off my shoulders and minimize the consequences of my sin. In the process, I heaped greater burdens on the person I had already wronged....

Ask God to keep you from this sin. When you go to confess a wrong, remember that you are there to serve the other person and not to gain comfort for yourself.”

Ken Sande, The Peacemaker.

Some ways to talk about this-Is there anything I need to do to make it easier to forgive me? I am sorry and can you help me to see more...tell me more about it.
Move toward something deeper...what does it feel like when I am impatient with you?
Mark 11:25-when you stand praying, forgive...

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN BRING US THE GIFT OF ONGOING REPENTANCE.

Without the powerful work of the indwelling Holy Spirit there would be little repentance in our lives. But it is virtually always the case that the Holy Spirit uses the tools of hard circumstances, our relationships with people, and suffering to dig deep enough down into our hearts to produce genuine transformation.

Repentance in your and my life.

- We not only need to be growing in our amazement of the gospel and the love of God for us, but we also simultaneously need to let the depth of our sin be revealed in our lives (cross chart).

- In Joseph we see his compassion and tenderness as well as his intentional disruption of his brothers. We need this disruption that leads to conviction of sin in order for us to grow into Christ likeness.
- We see Jesus disrupt Peter in John 21. By asking him three times if he loves him, Jesus is making Peter painfully retrace his steps and re-live his three fold denial. Why? To bring continual brokenness over his sin. Only then could Peter feed the sheep with the gospel.
- Joseph's brothers, because they do get broken, don't just get the food that they thought was their greatest need. They get forgiveness and reconciliation. They get restored with their family. They are brought into places of honor in society. They are used by God to become the nation of Israel to bring the message of the gospel to the nations.

“The gospel is the ultimate measure for continually breaking the ground of our heart open to the Spirit of God. Religion tells us: a) we are sinners, but not so bad that we can't satisfy God if we try hard to be good, and b) we are blessed, but not so blessed that we can ever be sure we are good enough. The gospel tells us: a) we are lost and far more wicked than we ever dared think, but b) we are completely loved and accepted by the Father who sees us as beautiful in Christ. This is the ultimate 'sun' and 'frost'. It makes sin far more convicting than ever, but it makes his love far more real and assured than ever. We need the reality of both to change.”

Tim Keller. Living in a Pluralistic Society.

Think of your heart as a continent.

Each of our hearts is like a continent with many unreached people groups deep inside, with many enemies of the gospel. The problem is that I love my native ways. Many days I am more of an unbeliever than a believer. Only as we learn to take the gospel of God's love and grace to the nations inside our own hearts, will we have the missional passion and power to take the gospel to the nations of the world and have something with which to feed the sheep.

Worldly or Godly sorrow?

Tim Keller has said that words are not the currency of forgiveness; pain is. Likewise, words are not the currency of repentance; pain or godly sorrow is.

Reflecting on the impact of the Sonship by Phone course in her life, a woman wrote:

“I have been learning the difference between confession and repentance. Confession is a lot more comfortable than repentance. I can handle confession without too much of the Holy Spirit but I cannot do repentance without the Holy Spirit working in my heart. Confessing is humbling but repenting is death.”

Here are some common examples of the ways we often apologize. Each shows how we try to minimize our impact and thus defend our self, rather than owning our impact and being willing to die to our self in humble repentance.

Worldly Sorrow	Godly Sorrow
Worldly sorrow, or confession, or shallow repentance is our usual way of saying “I’m sorry.” It does not cost us much pain.	Godly sorrow, or deeper repentance, is the lifestyle that Jesus is calling us to. It is a dying to self that will cost us some pain.
<i>I am only sorry for what I DO.</i>	<i>I am sorry also for what I AM.</i>
<i>I confess after I have sinned.</i>	<i>I am continually repentant because of my sin.</i>
<i>I focus on my behavior and desire moral reformation.</i>	<i>I focus on my disposition and desire spiritual transformation.</i>
<i>I want quick resolution so that you will get off my back.</i>	<i>I want deeper insight, so I need you to hang in there with me.</i>
<i>I can’t believe I am like that. Let’s not talk about it any more.</i>	<i>I can believe I’m like that. We need to talk about it more.</i>
<i>I have an explanation</i>	<i>I am sick of my explanations</i>
<i>I repent by trying to do it right next time.</i>	<i>I repent that I don’t have my own righteousness and trust Christ to be my righteousness.</i>
<i>I am sorry because I got found out.</i>	<i>I am thankful that you brought this to my attention.</i>
<i>I am sorry that I offended you.</i>	<i>I am sorrowful that my sinful heart is so offensive.</i>

Session 4: Building bridges of peace: Conflict resolution

Peace at any price?

What is the difference between being a peacemaker and a peacekeeper?

CONFLICT – An Unusual Opportunity to Love

CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT

Jesus in Mt 22:37 – ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important. ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.’

Paul takes it even further.

Calling us to love one another—love in a way that does no wrong. We are called to love our neighbor. This requires faith—we need the gospel! Constructive conflict can be productive in a relationship but we don't like it because it is painful, exposes failure, frustrating, risky, and the consequences can be bad...Conflict is a chance to love.

Romans 13:10 “Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law. For the commandments say, ‘You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.’ These and other such commandments are summed up in this one commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law. “

James 4:3 “What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? You want what you don't have so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them.”

1. What does ‘loving people by faith’ look like?
2. Conflict starts early in life
3. Conflict continues when we don't get what we want.
4. What's your conflict ‘style’?
5. Conflict is something God uses.
6. Owning our impact, opening our hearts.

NOTES:

Conflict starts early: example of Rebekah in Genesis 25:22 children struggling in her womb:
Why is this happening to me?

- Depravity: conflict is part of our fallen nature—we want to be God and be in charge because we can make life work. We do not want to be dependent.
- Construction: God is in the business of redemption. What happens in my heart when I don't get what I want? My heart is exposed—what does God want to show me?

Whatever my heart is ready to fight for—that is an idol. Our heart idols have taken such control that we fight to protect our idols. I will be satisfied if I get what I want or convinced myself that I need...

God is never sorry to see an angry child. Come to me! We think we have to get it all fixed before we come to Him. He is always ready for us to come. God invites me at that moment to repentance—bring repentance. It is an unlikely route to joy.

In a recent conflict, what did I want that I wasn't getting?
What happened in my heart as a result?

Anger—not no-anger or blow-anger, but slow anger...

Blocked goals are building blocks of anger.

How do I express it...does it go internal or external?

You can die in a fire or die by freezing to death...there is hot anger and cold anger. When you don't explode you can feel self-righteous and hurt by icing out. The inability to acknowledge what is happening in my heart can make me cold.

Gossip is also a way of expressing anger—letting anger out in an inappropriate way.

We have a choice. Ask the Holy Spirit to give us grace to love the offender.

There is a lot of energy in anger—use it for good!

Give me a heart to mount a love-offensive towards the person. What does it mean to love this person—maybe pursuit or maybe overlook...really risky on this slippery slope.

Questions for family/friends in addictive patterns:

- Is this person's offense seriously dishonoring God?
- Has it permanently damaged the relationship?
- Is it seriously hurting others?
- Is it seriously hurting the offender?

Constructive conflict:

- is more concerned about winning the person than winning the argument
- deal humbly
- deal with issues not personalities
- ask questions instead of accusing
- approachable and teachable
- give up proving right and wrong
- look to Holy Spirit to change instead of demanding change—demand destroys desire
- reject gossip and deal directly with person involved
- ask for wisdom instead of presuming knowledge
- look for log in own eye by acknowledging deception
- realize strong convictions are infected with sinful attitudes. I believe these things so that makes me right
- inviting the other into something better—desiring God's glory
- commitment to ongoing future forgiveness

God, show me the idols of my heart that when they are blocked lead me to anger.

Get someone close to you to tell you what it looks like when you are angry...draw me a picture and explain it...when I am angry, this is what it is like... How do you know when I am angry? How do I impact you when I am angry?

How do you know I am angry before I say anything?

How do I refuse to be involved, to disengage?

Knowing your responses so you can ask the Holy Spirit to change you. Find out who I am and set it before God. Be a Psalmist and put it in to words to God...this is what they told me-am I like this? What am I willing to do about this? He is calling me to die--speak less, stop responding...may cost me my life...may be wounded...

Session 5: Hope for change: Living by faith that leads to loving well

What are the dynamics of deep change? How does “faith expressing itself in love” work itself out in building, strengthening and repairing broken bridges of relational connections?

1. Why don't we get what we ask for when we pray?

James 4:1-6. What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. 4You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? 6But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

We ask with motives that are selfish--I am adulterous and will use someone else for my pleasure. Watch my tendency to pray this way with the remnant of an adulterous heart. Whose glory am I seeking? Am I using God for my pleasure? Praying with wrong motives =worldliness. It is despising God! The spirit envies intensely something very different than pride...prayer can reveal my adulterous heart-let it be exposed!

2. How can we be certain about faith?

Hebrews 11:1. Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:39-40. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. 40God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

We normally think of faith as belief or trust (which it is), but Faith is about receiving. John1:12
Faith is substance, certain, objective, confident...it is receiving the essentials of the riches of the gospel. As the Holy Spirit breaks our hearts, He opens up a conduit to receive. We need the Holy Spirit to keep unclogging the conduit!

Receive faith/confidence in the middle of our unfaithfulness.

What are some of the riches of the Gospel?

- forgiveness
- Christ's righteousness which is the source of my justification
- approval-100% approved of by God
- fruit of the Holy Spirit
- Zeph. 3:17 God rejoices over me with singing, quiets me with his love...

3. Faith is not so much about how much faith I have as it is about who my faith is connected to.

Luke 17:1-6. Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. 2It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied

around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. 3So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. 4If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him." 5The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.

It is not about quantity, it is about understanding. Jesus was disrupting them to get them to think...faith is about receiving...faith is about WHO
It is not about increasing your faith, it is about understanding the riches that you already have!

4. Faith is much more about receiving a great gospel than it is about achieving great trust.

Not about how much trust I can wind-up. It is not about working it up by effort.

5. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. Galatians 5:6.

Receiving the riches of the gospel allows me to love. How well am I loving? Why can't I love well? What do I need to receive so I can love well? Track it back up to see what I need to receive/believe...receiving the riches of the gospel results in greater love.

“Faith is the conduit through which the riches of the gospel are transported into our heart.” Charles H Spurgeon. All of Grace.