

True Peace

Pastor Paul Springer | November 5, 2017
Romans 12:15-21

Personal Connection (25 minutes)

Icebreaker

All of us have experienced the physical exertion of carrying a heavy load, whether it has been due to moving, grocery shopping, a backpack filled with textbooks, busy life mixed with parenting challenges, or packed luggage when traveling. The best part of this experience is when you are done carrying it and can put the load down for good!

Q. Unless you are training for a strength and endurance challenge, how heavy of a load would you **willingly** carry on your back for the majority of your day? What about for several days at a time? What about for years?

Ups and Downs

Q. How did it go last week? Share with the group some of your highs and lows, and offer praise to God for the doors that he has opened.

Praying for each other

Reflect on the questions above and share with the group. Take some time now and appoint someone in the group to pray for spiritual strength and guidance to grow in areas of vulnerability.

Sharing Christ

Q. Were you able to share Christ with anyone this week?

Review Last Sunday's *What Now?*

Last week we discussed having discernment during times where God's will for your life is confusing. Despite living with unanswered questions, the Lord has a purposeful masterplan for your life! Give God the glory for all his provision; the big, the small, the good, and the bad.

Q. Has your spirit of thankfulness grown deeper? Has the depth of your prayer life increased?

Digging Deeper (30 minutes)

This Week's Key Concept:

Forgiving others just as Christ has forgiven us is key to growing deeper in relationship with Jesus Christ.

Read Romans 12:15-21

In verse 15, Paul instructs the Christians in Rome to "be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep."

In Genesis 1, there are seven accounts of God rejoicing. Every time the scripture says, "And God saw that it was good," he was rejoicing within himself because of the masterpiece he, as Triune God, had created!

John 11:1-44 describes Lazarus becoming ill, his funeral, and his rising from the grave after being dead for four days. Verse 35 says, "Then Jesus wept." Despite Jesus knowing he was going to put the Lord's glory on display with resurrecting Lazarus, he came alongside Mary and Martha and shared their grief with them.

Q. Do you find it easy or difficult to rejoice over good news with someone you care about? What about if the good news was from someone you don't get along with?

Q. Do you find it easy or difficult to empathize over bad news with someone you care about? What about if the bad news was from someone you don't get along with?

Verse 16 says, "Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!" Christ demonstrated and taught that we should treat ALL people with respect, no matter the differences. It may be difficult at times, but remember Christ died for them too!

Q. Do you find it difficult to associate with someone if you know you are not going to gain anything from them?

In verses 17-21, Paul talks about not retaliating for the hurts others have inflicted, but to respond with a spirit of grace so to bring glory to God, trusting that not only will God take care of their punishment but that he will fill you with his peace, understanding, and love.

Q. Have you experienced a time in your life when you have had success in forgiving someone for pain they have caused? If so, describe how you felt after the burden was released to God.

Reflect on this: If you release the burden of pain from an unforgiving heart, it leaves a space in which Christ will gladly fill. He fills it with his love! And, if you love someone the way Christ loves you, you will be willing to forgive. If you have experienced God's grace, you will want to pass it on to others. Remember, grace is undeserved favor.

Impact Questions

Q. What will it take to surrender your hurts to the Lord and learn to forgive, even if the person who hurt you never repents or expresses remorse? Are you willing to trust that the Lord will make what is wrong, right?

Think back to the Icebreaker. When you are unable or unwilling to forgive, it is like carrying an extra weight on your back, except it weighs on your soul. It separates you from the Lord. The people of this world are flawed and hurt each other a lot, but when someone hurts you, God wants to restore that relationship and your ability to grow through it, but we must choose to let his grace flow through us. Forgiveness does not imply that the person that hurt you gets away with it. Forgiveness frees you from living in bondage to grief and anger, which the enemy uses to pull you further from God! God will deal with those that have hurt you, in his timing. Just as God loves you, he loves those that have hurt you. He wants to redeem them, just as he wants to redeem you when you have inflicted pain on others. That can be done but only in his strength and timing.

What now? (15 minutes)

This week, with the Lord's guidance, search your soul for any unforgiveness you may be harboring. Pray specifically for the Lord to lift that burden of pain from your life. Then, if that pain grows in the shadows of your thoughts, pray for a forgiving heart again. Simultaneously, pray for the redemption of the person(s) who have hurt you. It is only when we see others through the eyes of Christ that we can look past our hurts and see their God-given value. In addition, if possible, pray for reconciliation for your severed relationship.

Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

Please share your prayer requests and praises, so that your LIFE Group may lift you up. Please pray for expanding Christ's Kingdom through your relationships, in our congregation, to the community, and in distant places.