

A/ Teaching

Bible Material – Key Points - based on Ephesians 4v1-3; Matthew 18

[Illustration: Concrete; Titanic]

The Calling

- Make *every effort* to keep unity (Ephesians 4v1-3)
- ⇒ It is not easy!

The Issue

- We make mistakes & fail to learn from mistakes (Matthew 26v31-35, v69-75, Acts 15v36-41)
- We sin & even continue to sin (1John 1v8 – 2v1, 2 Corinthians 12v14,19-21)
- We have personality, background, sensitivities, learned behaviour (Romans 8v12-15,12v2)
- ⇒ Be humble!

Side A - Change

- Learn from mistakes and do extra to avoid offence (Matthew 17v24-27, 1 Corinthians 10v23-11v1, Romans 14) {Jesus did not lay down life as a one-off, but continual service}
- Get rid of sin & what causes you to sin (Matthew 18v7-8)
- Don't cause others to sin (Matthew 18v5-6)
- Seek reconciliation before worship (Matthew 5v23-26)
- Conform to Christ (Romans 8v25, 12v2, Phil 2v5)
- ⇒ Change mind and behaviour!

Side B - Response

- Forbearance “charizdomai” – show grace (Colossians 4v13)
- Be careful with anger – gossip, sarcasm, slander (Ephesians 4v26, 31, 2 Cor 12v20)
- Do not judge – consider God, yourself, & where other party at (Matthew 7v1-6)
- Address Issue (Ephesians 4v15,29-30)
 - Be careful of intent and manner (Matthew 12v20, Ephesians 4v15,29-30)
 - Challenge in private, then with witness, then as church (Matthew 18v15-17)
 - Intent is to bring change, but if no response, then treat as pagan (“ ”)
- If response then forgive – keep no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13v5); forgive as Father does you (Matthew 18v23-36); treat as brother (Matthew 18v35)
- ⇒ Take care!

B/ Personal Reflection & Development - Materials available

Some of the following may help you reflect on these things further:

- Key Bible Passages with regards to us dealing with issues to maintain unity:
 - Matthew 5v23-26, 7v1-6
 - Matthew 17v24-18v35
 - Romans 14v1-15v13
 - 1 Corinthians 1v10-6v11,
 - 1 Corinthians 10v23-11v1
 - 1 Corinthians 11-14
 - 2 Corinthians 2v5-11
- Think about your personality, sin tendencies, learned behaviours... what areas do you need to address:
 - Do we recognise our sin? See 1 John 1v8
 - Are we willing to change? Remorse and Regret are not the same as Repentance. Remorse and regret are a sorrow at what has happened, but “Godly sorrow brings repentance” (2 Corinthians 7v10) which is a change of attitude and approach. To not change is to quench the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin and offends Jesus who requires repentance.
 - It may be we are willing to change, but are unable to follow through. Remember the parable of the two sons (Matthew 21v28-32). We need to:
 - Break the strongholds which have a grip on our lives
 - Be released from any demonic influence
 - Be enabled by the power of Holy Spirit
 - Exercise the power of the cross of Christ
 - Live in Victory over sin
 - It may be that you need support in doing this which may take the form of counseling, coaching, or prayer ministry.
 - For many, the ‘Freedom in Christ’ course is very helpful.
- Consider how you respond to Issues with others using the matrix on the back page.
- There are chapters in the following books that may be of help in your journey:
 - “Challenging Lifestyle” Nicky Gumbel; “Discipleship” David Watson
- Meditate on some songs:
 - Come set your rule and reign in our hearts again (Rend Collective)
- Key Bible verses to memorise and meditate on:
 - Colossians 3v13; Ephesians 4v2-3
- Further study:
 - How did Jesus deal with people who let him down (Peter: Luke 22v60-62, John 21v15-19; Judas: John 13v2-30, 18v1-11, Matthew 27v1-10).

Reflect on some of the “Small Team” and “Pair/Triplet” material before meeting.

C/ Small Team (1 hour 15mins + worship)

- Worship

- Summary of “Bible Material” (5 mins)
- Talk Questions (15 mins)
 - Our Calling & The Issue
 - Why is this matter so important? (Ephesians 4v1-3)
 - What is the fundamental problem we have?
 - The Call to Change
 - What is the difference between mistakes and sin?
 - What are we to do if we offend someone? (Matthew 5v23-26)
 - The Call to Respond appropriately
 - What are we always to do when someone offends us? (Colossians 4v13)
 - How can we decide if we should take further steps? (Matthew 18v15-17)

- Summary of “Practical” (5 mins)
- Practical Questions (30 mins)
 - The problem
 - Who is the church made up of?
 - Why do we still sin? Does sin stop someone being a child of God?
 - Why might I offend someone?
 - Why can it be hard to reconcile?
 - Learning from offending others
 - Can you remember a time when you offended someone?
 - How well was it handled between you?
 - How can we avoid offending others?
 - What should we do to seek reconciliation after an offence?
 - Why do we find it difficult to change? What can help?
 - Learning from being offended
 - Why might some people be more easily offended than others?
 - What does it mean to ‘forbear one another’ and exercise grace?
 - Look at the matrix of responses at the bottom of the next page.
 - What are the difficulties that might arise in the procedure Jesus lays down?
 - Have you seen this procedure handled well and produce fruit?

- Pray together (20 mins)
 - Pray for relational issues you are dealing with right now.
 - Pray for your “list-of-5” – may the church’s unity be a light to them!

D/ Pair/Triplet (40 mins)

- The goal is not to be right but to help one another as brothers/sisters in God (Ecclesiastes 4v12).
- Share and Discuss together (15 mins)
 - Share encouragements you have had from bible reading / prayer / worship.
 - Share areas where the Lord is challenging you to change at the moment, or where you have been challenged recently. How can you help each other in this? Remember Matthew 21v28-32 and the importance of following through.
 - Share about things that offend you. Encourage each other in dealing with these things.
- Read a passage from the Bible together (this could be one that one of you has read during the week or Romans 14v1-15v13). (15 mins)
 - What does this passage say about issues that divide Christians? What issues divide Christians today?
 - What does this passage instruct us to do?
 - In what ways in the passage does God enable us?
- Pray together (10 mins)
 - Give thanks and pray for one another based on the Bible passage and your discussion.
 - Pray Romans 15v13 over each other.
 - Pray for God to enable you to handle offence well and avoid offending others.
 - Pray for your "list-of-5".



Our response to Issues with others:

This matrix is a common way of showing how we might respond when issues arise depending on our consideration for others and our courage to express openly. The ideal is in the passive or assertive box, depending on what is right in the situation (some things do not need to be said).

Why might we respond to a situation in a non-ideal way?