

SESSION 2

SPIRITUAL HEALING: Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Reading: 2 Corinthians 5.16-21

2.1 Categories of Healing

I. Spiritual

- Cause: Ourselves
- Remedy: Repentance & Forgiveness
- Aim: Renewal of our relationship with God in the power of his Holy Spirit (Titus 3.3-7)

2.2 Confession

Means speaking the truth about:

- ourselves (1 John 1.8)
- others (Ephesians 4.15)
- God (Romans 10.9-13)

Need for discernment – good, bad and the effect of context.

2.3 Sin

- Sin is blunder, missing the mark.
- Involves thought, word, action
- Responsibility is ours
- Consequences always harmful, not necessarily removed by repentance
- Spoils relationships
- Sin is against:
 - Others - puts me first and treats others as disposable
 - Myself - diminishes my God given abilities
 - God - denies the truth of about Jesus and his good character and purposes
 - Me - by others

2.4 Forgiveness

- Heart of the Gospel
 - Romans 3.23-24 All have sinned, all justified by grace
 - Luke 15.11-end Prodigal Son

- Comes first
 - Romans 5.8 While we were sinners, Christ died for us

- Is to be received
 - Psalm 32.1-5

- Invites repentance
 - Mark 1.15 Repent, and believe in the good news
 - Turning to face a new direction. "I turn to Christ"

- Is needed daily
 - 1 John 1.5-10 If we say we have no sin ...
 - Growing in wholeness increases our awareness of sin

- Means letting go
 - Psalm 103.12 As far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.
 - Isaiah 38.17 You have cast all my sins behind your back
 - Micah 7.19 You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea
 - But may need to revisit some areas of pain to gain deeper forgiveness

- Enables restitution
 - Luke 19.1-10 Zaccheaus

- Can be linked to physical healing
 - Mark 2.1-12 Paralysed man
 - James 5.16 Confession and prayer
 - 2 Corinthians 5.19 Reconciliation
 - 1 Corinthians 11.19-32 Holy Communion

- Is to be shared
 - Matthew 6.14-15 Lord's prayer – forgive as forgiven
 - Matthew 18.21-end Unmerciful servant

- Is a decision
 - Colossians 3.13 Forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you
 - Response of the will

- Means facing truth
 - Luke 6.37-42 Do not judge, and you will not be judged
 - Romans 3.23 All have sinned

- Public or Private
 - James 5.16 Confess your sins to one another ... so that you may be healed
 - Ministry of Reconciliation (Sacramental Confession)

- Brings release
 - Mark 11.24-25 Whenever you stand praying, forgive
 - Freedom for others and ourselves
 - "Catching monkeys"

- Is a process
 - Never try to force someone to forgive before they are ready

2.5 Forgiveness leads to Acceptance

- God's forgiveness of my sins leads to his acceptance of me
- My forgiveness of others enables me to accept them
- My forgiveness of myself enables me to accept who I am
- My "forgiveness" of God enables me to accept him as he is (in reality, of course, this is repentance of my own wrong attitudes! See the *Forgiving God* booklet listed in Resource Section)

There will be a need to forgive everyone with whom we have a close relationship, including authority figures (e.g. parents, teachers, clergy, supervisors etc.)

2.6 True and False Guilt

We cannot be forgiven for things which are not our fault. However, sometimes we need forgiveness for our actions that indicate our participation in the guilt of others, eg community, family or tribal sin. For more information on this, see Russ Parker's *Healing Wounded History*.

Healing comes through **understanding the truth** which leads to **allocation of responsibility** and then **confession/forgiveness**. Remember that forgiveness is not betrayal and sin against children is not their fault.

2.7 A Process for Making an Apology

- Acknowledge the offence
- Accept responsibility ("I'm sorry **that** I ...")
- Express remorse ("I feel bad about letting you down")
- Offer an explanation
- Offer reparation
- Avoid re-offending

(Source: *Apologising in Business* by Richard Bull in *Faith in Business* Volume 10 Issue 3, Autumn 2006)

***I am neither: Good nor Bad; Generous nor Selfish;
Honest nor Dishonest; Saint nor Sinner. I am both***

***God loves me, forgives me and accepts me. And so, I can know God
and love, forgive and accept myself and others.***

Compare this with Jesus' summary of the law in Matthew 22.37-40.

SESSION 2 PRACTICAL WORK

Clearing the ground – Repentance

When we first become Christians, we hear the call to repent and turn from our sins to Jesus, our Saviour and Lord. Sometimes, as we ask God to forgive us, all the sins and burdens we have been carrying seem to fall away as we receive His forgiveness. The joy of forgiveness can continue for a time and then fade as we discover that the initial confession of our sin was shallow. Like the layers of an onion, we can need further confession and forgiveness to reach sins, guilt and resentments that are more deeply buried. (Psalm 51.6)

In this exercise, we bring the failings of our past and confess them to God. Take a sheet of paper and go back as far as you can remember asking the Holy Spirit to help you recall guilty memories - write down all the things that you still FEEL guilty about, e.g. 'I hurt so and so' or 'I was cruel to my brother' etc. You do not need to rake over every small sin or those you have already dealt with – let the Holy Spirit reveal the truth to you and write down what He shows you.

Now go over your list and ask for God's forgiveness for each item, confess them and ask for His forgiveness in the Name of Jesus. Receive his forgiveness with joy. Do this from as far back as you can remember to today. RECALL, WRITE, CONFESS, BELIEVE, RECEIVE. If at any point you do not feel forgiven then make a note in your journal so that you can return to it later, perhaps asking a trusted Christian friend to pray with you.

Having finished the confession, thank God for His love that forgives and covers every sin and remembers them no more!! Now fold the paper and read the words of I John 1.9. Keep the paper and we will burn them all together during the next session of the course.

Clearing the ground – Forgiveness

Take a new sheet of paper, this time recalling the hurts and wounds that you have received. Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of events and words that still hurt and bring out resentful feelings. Think about your father, mother, brothers and sisters, and the other authority figures in your life. One by one in your mind bring them before Jesus and work through your feelings (anger, hurt, resentment etc) in order to clear your relationship with them before God as deeply as you can.

Make a note of the incidents – e.g. 'Mother told me off in front of my sister for something I hadn't done...' or 'Go away, you always spoil things...' As you write, ask God to forgive you for holding on to the resentment and hurt.

Now forgive the person, just as God has forgiven you. Don't just "think" forgiveness, it is best to actually speak the words aloud in prayer: "Father, I forgive ..."

Go from as far back as you can remember up to today, confessing hurts and resentments and forgiving as you have been forgiven. If you find the memory very painful and hard to forgive, make a note of it in your journal so that you can consider it later, perhaps asking a trusted Christian friend to pray with you.

When you have finished, fold the paper and read the words of Ephesians 4.30-32. The paper will be burnt at the start of the next session.

SESSION 2 LINKWORK

Spend a few minutes thinking about the people who have had the most influence on your life.

Write two or three words to describe each of them.

Using the "Personal Profile" word-list in Section 2 of the Resources Section, choose words that, for you, best describe God.

Compare your word list with the drawing of God you did last week.

Using the same list, choose words that describe your natural father (or father figure). Write a brief imaginary letter to him to express your feelings about the relationship you have had with him.

When you have time, repeat this exercise for your mother (or mother figure).

Parents and care-givers have a role to nurture and care for us and to call us into independence and true, affirmed identity. God is a true parent to us and exhibits both fatherly and motherly concern. Think about how your earthly parents have affected your view of God. What views of God might you now want to change as an adult?

Read Psalm 139

Meditate on your understanding of God and of yourself.

Where is God active in your life and where do you try to keep him out?

Prayerfully review the course so far and write your reflections in your journal. Make a note of any questions you want to ask.