

Do the Work | Week 4 - Make the First Move

Message Big Idea

To restore relationships, we must do the work of initiating.

Scripture

Romans 5:8, Romans 12:9-21

Opening Questions

1. How have you been able to B.L.E.S.S. someone over the last few weeks?
2. What is your favorite way to relax?

Bible Discussion

3. Read Romans 5:6-8. What do you notice? What is this passage saying about God's love?
4. Read Romans 12:9-21. Make a list of all the ways this passage instructs us to take the initiative to restore relationships?
5. How would you summarize what both of these passages are saying?

Life Application

6. The logic of the New Testament is that if God took the first step in reconciliation, so do his people. What is challenging about taking the initiative in restoring a relationship?
7. Look at the three steps toward forgiveness below. Which one of these steps is new to you, or which is the hardest?
 - a. **Be Patient:** Give the other person the gift of not being ambushed. There are few things worse and less effective than a surprise reconciliation. Send a note of some kind saying, "If you are up for it, I would love to talk with you about what happened between us. Is that a conversation you can have with me? If not, it's OK."
 - b. **Be Differentiated:** This means staying away from blaming and limiting yourself to as many "I" statements as possible. For example, you could say, "I felt deeply hurt when you said that thing about me." Instead of saying, "You made me feel terrible when you said that thing about me." Being self-differentiated means, you are in a place where you can take responsibility for yourself. It means you can distinguish between your goals, values, thoughts, and feelings. It means you can confidently and humbly communicate without getting threatened or defensive.
 - c. **Be Connected:** This is when you are sure you can maintain some empathy for the other person. It's possible to be patient and self-differentiated and still be a jerk. When we work to maintain an emotional connection to the other person, we are caring for them without being identified by them. Maintain your freedom and safety to share what you believe while giving the other person the freedom to express their beliefs.
 - d. **Be specific about what happened and how you feel:** Then you can explicitly ask for and grant forgiveness out loud. Saying things like, "I am sorry for ____" and "would you please forgive me." Be careful not to put people on the spot. It likely took you time to get to this point to ask for forgiveness, and they will likely need time to grant it as well. That's OK. Or, if you have been wronged, it might mean granting forgiveness by explicitly saying, "I forgive you for ____." There can be incredible freedom and power in saying those words out loud?
8. Where do you need to "Go to Work?" What work do you need to do on yourself?
9. What initiative can you take to move toward another person? How can our small group support you?