

REAL Relationships: Forgiveness

Sermon series can be found at asburybham.org/sermons

Scripture Reading

Colossians 3:13-14

Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Summary

Our series on Real Relationships has covered how our most important relationships can thrive through commitment, oneness, respect, and evolving together. These are foundational elements of every good and healthy relationship.

The truth is, however, over time, we all make mistakes. We will all irritate, let down, and even sometimes hurt those we care about the most. So, for our relationships to go the distance, we must learn how to forgive and how to reconcile.

A United Methodist author and pastor provides us with clear guidance about forgiveness and reconciliation. He says that there are six essential words for healing any relationship:

I am sorry

I forgive you

Forgiveness is the act of letting go of the opportunity to hold a grudge, to seek revenge, or to carry the hurt or harm with you wherever you go.

Forgiveness can help heal relationships because it gives us the opportunity to accept the apologies of others and start the process of rebuilding our most significant relationships.

We can forgive people who have hurt us who are not contrite — those who fail to apologize. But true reconciliation requires some version of the person causing the hurt to say “I am sorry.”

A famous quote goes like this: “Forgiveness is for you, but Reconciliation takes two.”

Forgiveness is not reconciliation, but forgiveness is essential to reconciliation. True repairing of a relationship requires that each party take action to change, make amends, and let go of the harm done.

You might need to ask yourself about your own actions in some of your core relationships. How have you sought to apologize for what you have done or what you have not done? And how have you demonstrated forgiveness?

Think about relationships that have not healed from hurt. What could have been done differently by you or the other person to bring them back into a good and real relationship?

Discussion Questions

- Why is it so hard to say, “I am sorry” to someone? Is it more difficult to apologize for something you did (or said) or is it more difficult to apologize for something that someone took the wrong way?

- It has been said that we sin against God many more times than we ever sin against another person. What does it mean that God forgives us again and again for those sins and how should that apply to forgiveness in our relationships?

- Rev. Mike Holly mentioned in his sermon that reconciliation and forgiveness are different and that some harm that is done requires a longer and more complex path to reconciliation. Why is it important for us to do the serious work of reconciling instead of “forgiving and forgetting”?

- We know that it is hard to say, "I am sorry." It can also be difficult to say, "I forgive you." What are the normal concerns about offering forgiveness to someone? What are the opportunities that can take place in offering forgiveness to someone?
- Jesus tells Peter and the other disciples that they should offer forgiveness seventy times or seventy times seven times (depending upon the translation). Should we take Jesus literally with the number of times or is he teaching us something deeper about the role of forgiveness in our relationships?

Prayer by Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997)

Dear Jesus, help me to spread Thy fragrance everywhere I go. Flood my soul with Thy spirit and love. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may only be a radiance of Thine. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Thy presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus. Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be a light to others. Amen

Practice

We wrap up the "CORE" foundations of real relationships with forgiveness. This week, consider the following:

- Rev. Mike Holly pointed out that reconciliation can take intentional work. Spend time reflecting on your relationships. Is there someone in your life that you need to offer forgiveness to? Talk with God as you consider the steps toward forgiveness and reconciliation.