

Dear God...When someone you love walks away from God

March 27 & 28, 2010

1. Why do so many of us struggle with this?

We have a wrong view of love

- We're wrong to think that love = never confronting hard issues
- ***Correct the wise, and they will love you.*** Proverbs chapter 9 verse 8 (486)

We have a wrong view of our responsibility to & our effect on each other

- We think wrong things like, "I can't say anything!" or "What they do is between them & God!"
- My sin not only affects me, it affects my family, Bethel, and more - ***Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.*** Ephesians chapter 4 verse 25 (897)

We have a wrong understanding of the Bible

- ***Jesus said, "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged."*** Matthew chapter 7 verse 1 (738)
- ***Jesus said, "How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye."***
Matthew chapter 7 verses 4 & 5 (738)
- The Bible does not forbid correction; it forbids hypocritical & judgmental correction!

2. This is so hard to do...so why does God ask me to do this??

Because God wants us to be like Jesus

- No two words capture Jesus' heart better than "truth" & "grace"
- Jesus always spoke the truth & typically seasoned it with grace
- Truth without grace = mean spirited judgment; Grace without truth = spoiled rotten

True love demands tough talks

- ***I wrote that letter in great anguish, with a troubled heart and many tears. I didn't want to grieve you, but I wanted to let you know how much love I have for you.***
2 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 4 (883)
- True love = speaking the truth with grace

We can't grow until we confront the truth about ourselves

- ***We will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ...***
Ephesians chapter 4 verse 15 (897)
- When I speak the truth in love into someone's life, I give them an opportunity to experience real growth by dealing with their sin, their blind-spots, etc. This keeps me humble...

The stakes are huge

- ***If someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back, you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.*** James chapter 5 verses 19 & 20 (933)
- I must care more about the person's relationship with God than the person's relationship with me
- I must be willing to be misunderstood & rejected

3. Some random thoughts...

The best thing any of us can do for someone we love is to regularly pray for them

- ***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*** Ephesians chapter 6 verses 11 & 12 (898)

Often, family is the worst option to confront family

So how do I do this right?? (based on 2 Samuel chapters 11 & 12)

1. Get very clear about the issue - ***The Lord was displeased with what David had done.***

2 Samuel chapter 11 verse 27 (243)

- Make sure it's a sin issue & not an issue of preference

2. Make sure God's sending you - ***So the Lord sent Nathan the prophet...***

2 Samuel chapter 12 verse 1 (243)

- Is God sending me or am I sending myself?
- The stronger the relationship, the greater the capacity to handle truth in a positive way
- When I allow God to use me to do this, I allow God to send others to do the same in me

3. Address the issue face-to-face - ***If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense.*** Matthew chapter 18 verse 15 (749)

- Don't do this by phone, letter, email or text
- This needs to be done in person and in private!
- Remember that 85% of communication is non-verbal

4. Be gentle, wise & honest - ***If So the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story...***

2 Samuel chapter 12 verse 1 (243)

- It's not just about speaking the truth, it's HOW the truth is spoken!!
- ***...If another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path.*** Galatians chapter 6 verse 1 (893)

Before you go...

- Pray for yourself & your heart, that you go in love
- Go with a sense of brokenness, not self-righteousness or pride - If you're looking forward to it, you're probably not the right person to go!
- Consider the timing – Is the person at a place where they can receive this? Is this the right time, place, occasion?
- Stay away from accusing or condemning words
- Identify with this struggle in your own life. Share your own story & brokenness in this area

5. Pray that God will make them open & receptive - ***David confessed to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."*** 2 Samuel chapter 12 verses 13 (243)

6. Repentance ≠ no consequences - ***David confessed to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan replied, "Yes, but the Lord has forgiven you, and you won't die for this sin...your child will die."*** 2 Samuel chapter 12 verses 13 & 14 (243)

7. Assure them of God's forgiveness - ***Nathan replied, "the Lord has forgiven you..."***

2 Samuel chapter 12 verse 13 (243)

- The goal of this process is restoration, NOT revenge or winning!
- Help the person receive forgiveness & hope

Next weekend: Easter with 4 services, Saturday @ 6 pm and Sunday @ 9 am, 10:30 am & 12 noon