

4. The question is not: "Who do they think they are?" The question is: "Who do I think I am?" Being in right relationship with our brother and sister is high priority for the Lord. Take a few moments and reflect on this truth. God wants His children to be reconciled to one another. In the space below write down the name (or initials) of someone at whom you hold an offense, or who holds an offense toward you. As best you can, describe the offense, it's source, and what you will do about it with the Lord's help and strength.

Name:

What they did?/What I did?

Have I tried to make amends? If so, how?

What is the Lord instructing me to do now?

Have I asked the Lord to forgive me?

With God's help, how will I forgive them, love them, and give them to God?

breaking free

Text: Mark 6:1-6 (NIV)

The Plain Truth

The question is not, "Who do they _____ they _____?" The question is, "Who do _____ I am?"

1. _____ with God

2. The height of pride is refusing to _____.

One Year Bible Reading

November 16: Ezekiel 33:1-34:31, Hebrews 13:1-25, Ps. 115:1-18, Prov. 27:21-22
November 17: Ezekiel 35:1-36:38, James 1:1-18, Psalm 116:1-19, Prov. 27:23-27
November 18: Ezekiel 37:1-38:23, James 1:19-2:17, Psalm 117:1-2, Proverbs 28:1
November 19: Ezekiel 39:1-40:27, James 2:18-3:18, Psalm 118:1-18, Proverbs 28:2
November 20: Ezekiel 40:28-41:26, James 4:1-17, Psalm 118:19-29, Prov. 28:3-5
November 21: Ezekiel 42:1-43:27, James 5:1-20, Psalm 119:1-16, Proverbs 28:6-7
November 22: Ezekiel 44:1-45:12, 1 Peter 1:1-12, Psalm 119:17-32, Prov. 28:8-10

November 15 & 16, 2014

Breaking Free

Turning... Resentment into Reconciliation

Life Group Lesson • Week of November 16

It's easy to criticize. That is, until we're the one being judged. Think about it, we criticize the preacher—until we're the one standing before a hard audience expecting an answer from God. We criticize the single mom, until our daughter comes home and says she's pregnant. We criticize the dad who can't seem to control his son, until our child becomes prodigal and throws his life away on drugs. We criticize the family struggling to make ends meet, until we suddenly lose our source of income. We're quick to judge and quick to criticize. Too often we never stop to ask, how is it with me? Why am I taking offense at this person? Who am I to judge?

Read Mark 6:1-6

When Jesus began teaching in the synagogue of His hometown, folks were amazed initially: "Where did He get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?" But then they scoffed, "He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And His sisters live right here among us." In other words, "Who does He think He is?" Many of the people of Nazareth became critical of Jesus. As a result, they took offense and refused to believe in the Lord. Their critical spirit cost them everything in the end (see vv5-6).

1. Recall a time you said of someone, "Who does he think he is?" How did your critical spirit cause you to hold an offense toward that person?

Because of their unbelief, Jesus couldn't do any miracles among people in His own hometown. Instead of being amazed at their faith, He was amazed at their unbelief. Over time, holding onto an offense can result in deep-seeded resentment. The very folks who should have been proud of Jesus and joyfully supportive of His ministry wanted to throw Him over a cliff! (see Luke 4:28-30)

2. Resentment and anger can eventually lead to violence and murder (see Genesis 4:6-7 and Matthew 5:21-22). What is at the root of criticism?

Why is it "anti-God" to harbor a critical spirit toward someone and deliberately refuse to let go of the offense?

Unbelief is a very dangerous thing. Refusing to believe in Christ—that He loves us, forgives us, and gives us the power to forgive—not only robs us of God's blessings but leads to death and eternal separation (see Matthew 18:35). Breaking free is not achieved by hanging onto an offense—it is achieved by letting go. As we kneel at the nail-pierced feet of Jesus, His scars beckon us to let go of any wrong, any offense, any anger, and any feeling of entitlement—because that is what Christ has done for us. For there to be restoration, we must go to the person who has offended us (or we have offended) in a spirit of love and reconciliation, not in a spirit of resentment.

3. How are we to deal with an offense according to Matthew 5:23-24?

According to Matthew 18:15-20, what steps are we to take if another believer sins against us?

Verse 17 of Matthew 18 is difficult. But even though it's hard to let go of a brother or sister who refuses to be reconciled, we never stop loving them. We give them to God. It may take years but the Lord can work in deep places where no other person can go. The important thing to remember is: Don't play God. Jesus says, "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven" (Luke 6:37).

When we step into someone else's shoes we will see life from an entirely different vantage point. Surely this is what Jacob had to do on the eve before meeting his estranged brother, Esau. After twenty years of bitterness—the shame of lying, stealing your brother's birthright, running from fears—God finally pens Jacob to the ground. In changing Jacob's name to "Israel" God then promises to fight *for* him.

Read Genesis 32:6-8 and Genesis 32:22 – 33:4

God loves the offender and the offended. Jacob had to get things right with God before he could get things right with his brother. For Jacob seeing Esau's face was like seeing the face of God (Genesis 33:10b). If you're having a hard time forgiving someone, you may first need to look into the face of Christ and see what forgiveness looks like. Christ's death on the cross covers all sin and all offenses. We have no right to hang on to resentment when our Lord desires reconciliation. "I have swept away your sins like a cloud. I have scattered your offenses like the morning mist. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free" (Isaiah 44:22).