

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one under your seat. I think it's important that we see what the Word has to say today. We are in week nine of *Recovering Redemption*, our fall series. The first eight weeks of that have all been built around the vertical relationship we have with God.

Although we have mentioned a couple of times some of the horizontal effects of our vertical relationship, we haven't really dealt with horizontal relationships up until this point. So I want to turn here and, over the next couple of weeks, I want to discuss horizontal relationships in light of where our vertical relationships should now be if we have heard and submitted to the Word of God up until this point.

What we've covered in the first eight weeks is simply that you and I, by our nature, were separated from our creator God, and in that separation, because of sin, found ourselves on some crooked paths, trying to satisfy our souls in ways we simply can't satisfy our souls. I tried to flesh it out some, but let me say it more explicitly today.

When you find yourself on those crooked paths, separated from your creator God, there will be collateral damage in regard to your relationship with others. Let's talk through those paths again. If I'm on the crooked path where what's going to satisfy my soul and give me full life is a better version of myself, if what's going to finally satisfy the angst inside of me is me becoming a better version than who I currently am, despite the fact that to *this* point in my life that has always been a future version of me...

It's a very rare man who gets to this spot and is like, "Now I'm there." If that's you, I'm guessing you don't have any friends. That's just my guess. You probably have some people who are willing to smooch your backside, but you don't have any friends. If we're on the path where a better version of ourselves is what's going to satisfy us, then think of the collateral damage that causes around you.

If life is about you, if it's about you getting to this place, you becoming this thing, then don't people become commodities? Very quickly, aren't you almost forced to use others as leverage to get where you want to get? Genuine relationships aren't built like that. Strong families aren't built like that. Strong business isn't built like that. Sure, you might make some coin for a moment, but even that eventually will have the light of the sovereign King of the universe shine on it.

Say you're not on that one. Say you're on the path where you're going to find somebody who completes you. That's your spouse or your group of friends or your children. You're on the path that says, "No, I need to be accepted and loved. I need to be cheered on. I need someone to put me uppermost in their affections." That causes all sorts of train-wreck carnage.

Probably the greatest gift of God given to me, outside of my salvation, was the wife he gave me. She's an unbelievable woman, and she's beautiful. I mean, I can't help but say she's beautiful, but that's just what it is. It's just the surface. She is a brilliant thinker. She doesn't just regurgitate what she has read. She can process. She's a fascinating writer. She has such a poetic, smooth style. She writes some of the songs we sing here. In fact, even this morning she's up with our students at Focus, helping to lead worship with them.

She disciplines a strange array of women. Right now, she's disciplining a high-school student, a 51-year-old who's just trying to get by, and an extremely wealthy, makes-us-all-look-impoverished woman once a week. The breadth of her ability to engage a 16-year-old girl's heart, a 51-year-old woman who's just trying to make ends meet, and a woman who could make all of our ends meet, all while speaking truth and pouring into all of them, is a thing that fascinates me.

Let me tell you what Lauren stinks at. Are you ready? Being God. She's awful at it. I don't know what else to say she's awful at, but with great courage and truth-telling I can say she makes a crummy god. Do you know who's worse than she is? My kids. All three of them. Terrible, terrible gods. Now are they cute? They're ridiculously cute. Sometimes is it hard to discipline them because their disobedience is funny? Yeah. God help me, yes. Don't judge me. You've been there. It's like, "You go to your room. Go. Go now!" "Can you believe that?" Then you have to say, "Get in here. No, sir."

In the end, they make terrible gods. My friends make crummy gods. This job is a crummy god. Shall I go on? If you're on the path that says, "Other people are going to satisfy me," then think of the weight I put on Lauren, the weight I put on my children, the weight I put on this job if, in the end, what I want from them is to be what only God can be for me. That creates collateral damage. If there is an unrealistic expectation put on the shoulders of my wife, my children, my friends, they will surely crumble under the weight of that.

What about the world? What if we're running to the world? What if the world is our god? Well, it depends on how you define the world. If we're defining the world as taking the good gifts of common grace and using them for sinful means, then again, there's going to be collateral damage. You're not going to get drunk all that often with a group of friends before you offend some of them. Correct?

If your worldliness is more of the business acumen, where you're going to climb the corporate ladder and become the most powerful man in the universe... A couple of things on that. First, in a very godly, hardworking way, seek to climb the corporate ladder. Wring all of the giftedness out of your life for the glory of his name and the common good, but ultimately, to do that in a way that is sinful is going to cause some collateral damage. It is way too common for men to forsake the very thing their wife and children need to give them things they don't. That's collateral damage.

What about religion? Let's be straight. Does anyone care for religious people? What I mean by *religion* is a rule-based morality that has no grace for anyone who doesn't measure up. *Religious* people don't like religious people. There's a collateral damage that occurs when the scorecard is how much better you are than other people. It turns everything into the unhealthy form of competition. There's a *healthy* form. This is an *unhealthy* form of competition.

For those of us who are on these crooked paths... All of those, by the way, are sin against God, but in sinning against God, that vertical fracture creates a ripple effect across the horizontal relationships we have that creates stress, fallout, brokenness, anger, betrayal, bitterness, resentment, frustration, anger, and (God help us) rage.

What we've discussed in the first eight weeks is how God rights the vertical relationship. All of our sin, past, present, and future, and all of our guilt driven out by the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ so we can gladly and wholeheartedly say that for those of us who are in Christ there is no condemnation. "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for what the law could not do, weak as it was in the flesh, God did by sending his Son."

I am forgiven, not walking in shame, because God has delighted in me despite me. He has conquered my fears and my anxieties. He has called me his own. I am forgiven and delighted in by the King of glory despite me, not because I'm awesome or I've figured out the Rubik's cube of behavioral modification. That's not why it occurred. It occurred because he was good and gracious and he sought me and found me. That's it. Period.

There's no "but" to that sentence. He came and got me. He came and sought me. He saved me. If I responded to that wooing, I responded by the gift of faith he gave me. Even the faith to believe in his grace was given to me by God, so, standing here today, I have nothing to boast in but him. Nothing. I have nothing to point to but him. God did this. God rescued me. God saved me.

Now let me be honest about what I'm saying here. He has righted the vertical relationship, yet I still have issues horizontally. Anyone else? I'm righted vertically. I know that. Yet horizontally, I still have some

issues. I'll get mine out early. I'm quick-witted and passionate. Here's what that means. Maybe five times in my life have I laid in bed at night and thought, "I wish I would have said..." Five. I literally this week tried to think how often I've lain in bed after having a disagreement with someone and thought, "Oh, you know what I should have said?" I lie in bed and go, "Dadgum! I can't believe I said that."

A mark of my life, although we're giggling about it, has been that I have wounded others and have really jabbed at the soul of others by my careless quick-wittedness, by the razor sharp edge of my ability to think quickly, process quickly, and say things quickly before I have thought, "Is this helpful? Is this wise? Should this be said?" I just say it. There are times I'm like, "No!" But it's gone. It's out. So despite the fact I have been vertically reconciled to God, even now, horizontally, I still am almost habitually seeking the forgiveness of others.

Let me take us to 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. Let me ask this question, since you're probably already there. How many of you over the last 12 to 18 months have had a falling out of sorts with someone? Go ahead. Just get that up for a second. Let's look around. All right. Now how many of you would say, "The falling out wasn't me; the falling out was the other person"? Let's do it. Hey, this is a safe place. "It wasn't all me. I was cool." If you're sitting next to that person right now, you're not right.

How many of you who raised your hand would say, "I'm a Christian. I believe God has forgiven me. I believe God delights in me"? Okay. So now we have vertical right relationships that horizontally are still walking in some havoc. How are we to address that, look at that, and engage that? Let's look at what should be going on in our hearts. Second Corinthians 5:14-21:

"For the love of Christ controls us..." Some of your versions will say, "Compels us." Controls us, compels us. **"For the love of Christ controls [compels] us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."**

That's nothing different than we've been covering the last eight weeks. We are compelled by the love of God. We are motivated in how we live our lives by the love of God made manifest for us in Christ. We were dead, and we've been raised to walk in the newness of life. We have been resurrected with Christ to walk in a new way that's not consistent with our old ways.

We said it last week and earlier in the series: "I don't live over *there* anymore; I live *there*." There's a way I used to live, but now, compelled by Christ, controlled by Christ... I know not only was *I* dead in my trespasses and sins, but *all* have died in their trespasses and sins. We have been raised now and walk in the

newness of life, so my behavior now is compelled, controlled by, motivated by not just duty but by the love of Jesus Christ and the love of God made manifest for me in him.

"From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer." This is simple. I now see with spiritual eyes. At one point I didn't have the ability to see with spiritual eyes, but now I see with spiritual eyes. I regarded Christ according to the flesh, I regarded *others* according to the flesh, but no longer do I do that. Why? Because the love of Christ compels me, because I have been the recipient of a love that has transformed how I see Christ and how I see others.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Second Corinthians 5 is creating this kind of rhythm that you and I are going to live in: That we are controlled and compelled by Christ. We regard no one in accordance to the flesh, because we know all have died and that when Christ died those of us who are in Christ died with him, so now, as we look, we see with spiritual eyes on the world around us.

So what does that mean? I think one of the most profound verses in the Bible in regard to how it's actually lived out is found in John 13. In John 13, Jesus makes a provocative statement: "They will know we are his disciples by the way we love one another." That's provocative. I'll tell you why. The culture in which we live has a growing acidity in it.

What I mean by that is there are people in our culture whose whole job it is to tear other people down. We exalt our heroes quickly so we can tear them down even faster. "How awesome is this person. How amazing is this person." Then we'll just rip them to shreds for some careless sentence they said, for something they did that we, as a culture, feel they shouldn't have done. There's no rhyme or reason to it. It's honestly madness. A lot of that actually seeps into the church.

We don't tend to give the benefit of the doubt. We don't tend to be gracious, despite the fact we're the recipients of an unmeasured amount of grace. We have a tendency to attack people quickly, to be disappointed quickly, to grow frustrated quickly, and (God help us) we have the tendency to wound others quickly when we feel like there has been injustice, whether there *has* been injustice or not. This provocative statement, that the world, those outside the church of Jesus Christ, would know we are *inside* of Jesus Christ by how we interact with one another (namely, our love for one another), I've seen in flashes, but it's far from consistent.

God puts a good weight on his people to work toward reconciliation whenever we have sinned against others or harmed others, whether we know we did or not. If we took a quick poll in here... How many of you in here have offended someone, hurt someone, wounded someone, and had no idea you did it? Anyone? Has anybody had that person come and go, "Hey man, I need you to forgive me; this really wounded my heart and I didn't handle it well," and you were like, "Gosh, I don't even remember that"? It happens.

God begins to put a good weight (not a heavy weight, but a good weight) on his children to pursue peace whenever there's conflict, whenever there's a falling out, to make things right, to own all we can for the sake of his name and the good of the relationship. In fact, I'll show you a couple of these. Romans 12:18, such a poignant verse, says, "**If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.**"

I love all of the components of that verse. "If possible..." That means there *will* be some times it's not possible. "...as far as you can help it..." That means there are times where you're going to have to own your part and the reciprocity won't be there. "...live at peace with all men." I find there's a bit of a goofy game that happens when people get in conflict.

First, their versions of the conflict will almost always be different, and no one really wants to own anything. Everyone thinks the other person is at fault. If you start asking questions, it gets almost cartoonish. Not to make light of this scenario at all, but if the other person is 90 percent to blame and my 10 percent was how I responded to what they did, there is a common belief that I don't have to own my 10 percent because they're 90 percent to blame.

No, you've still sinned. You've sinned against God and against them. "Well, that sin was only a response to their sin." It's still sin. It's not like God is going, "You know what? I totally get that. In fact, what I would have done..." No. In fact, God has already given us the example of what he would have done, which is initiate and forgive, engage and reconcile. Those of us who have been forgiven, how consistently do we walk in gratitude for the grace we've been shown by the King of glory? Not as often as we should, I can tell you that. We're quick to forget, quick to presume upon the Lord for his grace and forgiveness, God help us.

One of the ones I love, because it ties this whole vertical/horizontal thing together... This is Numbers 5:5-7. You probably don't even need to turn there because you have Numbers memorized. Numbers and Leviticus. For so many of you, those are your favorite books. I'm just proud of you as your pastor. Numbers 5:5-7 says:

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the people of Israel, When a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the LORD...' " The sin is against the Lord, but watch what happens next. **"...and that person realizes his guilt, he shall confess his sin that he has committed. And he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong."**

It's confusing, isn't it? I have sinned against the Lord, but I need to make restitution to the one I have sinned against. This is what I was saying. When you sin against God, there is a ripple effect that creates havoc in the relationships around you. When I, with a great deal of pride, say, "Not your way, my way," that's going to cause some ripple effects.

When I go, "I'm smarter than you here, God," that's going to cause some issues. If God's call to obedience is about lining us up with how he created the universe to work well, then every time I shake my fist at the heavens and pretend I know more than he does I'm getting off rhythm, which is going to cause some issues in the relationships I'm walking in.

Look at what he says here. When you have broken faith with God ("I don't trust you; I have to handle this myself") and in that have harmed others, you seek them out, you confess, you ask for forgiveness, and you walk in restitution; in fact, give more than you took from them. Only a heart transformed by God has the ability to do that. If we're going to be able to do this, we need to do some introspection. Let me walk you through Matthew 7, starting in verse 3:

"Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

Where we know we have harmed others, hurt others, are walking in conflict... In fact, let me say it this way. The first thing I want to do personally if I'm in conflict, because of my understanding from the Word of God, is go introspective and see what I have done to sin against God or this person. In 20 years of pastoral ministry, I have yet to come across the situation where one person has to own 100 percent of it.

Are there morons out there? Herds of them. Even in that, even with my confession that, yes, I've met many foolish men or women who own the bulk of the conflict, I still have yet to see one where there's 100 percent fault on one side and the other person owns zero. I have never been in a conflict where I didn't have something to own in it. So I want to go introspective first.

Now that's not my personality type. That's hard work for me. Reading the Old Testament... When Ezra sees the people of God sinning, he pulls his own beard out. That's not my style. Nehemiah, when *he* sees the people of God sinning, drags them out into the street by their hair and beats them with rods. That's what I'm talking about. If I have an Old Testament-style ministry, *that's* the one I want: to just pull a brother out by his hair and whack him a couple of times. I feel like good can come from that.

When I'm in conflict, I know how God has wired me. I know my zeal. I have a sense of justice. I know I can get agitated, specifically in certain arenas. Like you give me a man not loving his wife well... I have to quell that in me. You show me a man who's abusing a woman verbally and emotionally, and I have a special last-chapter-of-Nehemiah-type ministry that starts to birth up in my heart.

When all is said and done, you and I need to go introspective first. "What do I need to own here? What have I done? Where have I added fuel to this fire? Where have I thrown logs?" My mind will quickly reveal the sin I'm walking in, because here's what happens. "The only reason you acted that way, Matt, is that he... Matt, you're not like that. You wouldn't have done that. He forced that in you." What's happening? I can see I'm trying to justify my own sin before the Lord.

The Bible says before we can get... Everybody loves Matthew 18. In fact, when people confront people, they like to quote Matthew 18. That's where we are next weekend, but we have to do this one first. Before you get to Matthew 18, you take that log out of your fat head. You can't go do Matthew 18 well if you're a hypocrite walking in blatant sin against the person. You need to own it, and you need to own all you can, maybe even *more* than you can, for the glory of God and the good of the relationship.

That means when I'm in conflict I almost always want to step in and go, "Brother, I need you to forgive me. Here's what I've done. I have spoken brashly and harshly. I have been more aggressive than the Lord would have me. I need you to forgive me. I didn't value your soul. I didn't value where you were in God's progressive sanctification. I didn't show you the grace that has been shown me a thousand times. Will you please forgive me?"

I'm not looking in that moment for reciprocity. If I am, that conversation more often than not is going to go badly. I don't say, "Will you forgive me?"

"Yes, I'll forgive you."

"Anything else you want to say? I mean, since we're here. No? Well then..." I'm going to need another meeting with you next week after I say *that*. You have to just own it and then trust the Lord. If there is tension in a relationship...

One of the things I've seen here that's heartbreakingly sad is that there are some of you who are actively avoiding other people who go to this church. You're picking your service based on where somebody else will be. "Well, they hurt me." I'm not saying they didn't hurt you. I've already laid down that I'm well aware of the sinful tendency of men, including myself. But our thing must be to look inside our hearts, see where we have sinned against others, and then to seek out reconciliation and make amends for what we can own.

"If it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live at peace with all men." That means we're seeking out amends. We're seeking reconciliation. Really, as we seek forgiveness for our sins against others, there are some traps there. Ken Sande is going to help us with that. You can Google this if you want. These are the "Seven A's of Confession" by Ken Sande. It's on the web. In fact, we're going to hand out a card next week to everyone after we walk through Matthew 18 and how to do that, just to protect us from some of you getting overzealous.

1. *Address everyone involved.* If we have sinned against a group of people, then we address everyone involved. We don't address one and exclude the other. "Well, he's kind of the leader of the group, so I'll just confess to him and won't make amends with those others." No. We address everyone involved. Most consistently, this takes place in my family.

I have to gather three kids and a wife and go, "Dad has been grumpy." I don't know how you work. I tend to not have laser-like focus with my grumpiness. I just kind of spread it out evenly on everyone. So I've had to gather my family and say, "Please forgive me. I'm grumpy. I've been short. I've not been gracious. Daddy has not been fun. Being fun is a part of our little family crest. Please forgive me."

2. *Avoid if, but, and maybe.* It's so important that you hear this. When you're meeting with someone to make amends, to seek reconciliation, to own your sin, you don't use that as a platform for accusation. "I need you to forgive me because you..." is not you seeking forgiveness; it's you making accusation, and it's wicked. It means you're not serious about your own sin against the Lord first and this person second, regardless of your percentage.

You have begun to play the game I've so clearly tried to lay out with you, where you judge your righteousness not based on the holiness of God but rather on what other people do. You feel justified in your accusation, not owning *your* sin, because you're better than this person according to the way you're seeing the world. You're *not* better; you're in the same state. We regard no one according to the flesh.

3. *Admit specifically.* We're not vague in our confession. "Brother, I need you to forgive me."

"For what?"

"I've just sinned against you."

"How's that?"

"I just did some stuff."

No, you own it. You sinned. Are you surprised you did? I think this is the thing where my mind has a hard time... Are you surprised you sinned against someone? We've already covered this in the series. If sanctification is progressive (namely, we're not there yet), then are you surprised you sinned against someone?

I'm actually more surprised when I *don't*. I know what's going on inside of me. I know the thoughts. Sometimes what I think scares me. Anyone else? I'm like, "Oh my gosh! I can't believe I thought that." It's one of the reasons I've been able to say for 10 years, "If the thoughts in your mind this week were put on that screen, would you like to hang out in here and watch it?" That's a universal "No." No one is like, "Sure. Roll it." No one is going to say that. Sometimes what I think scares me.

So I want to specifically own it. "I have sinned against you. I have treated you harshly. I have said things behind your back, some of which were not true." You have to watch it, because the gut right there is, "Some of them were." That's "platforming." That's sinful. We're going to admit specifically.

4. *Acknowledge the hurt.* When I first got married, one of the things no man coached me on was that the way Lauren felt mattered, regardless of the data I had for why she shouldn't feel that. Are you tracking with me? "I just feel like..." "Well, you shouldn't feel that way for this, this, and this. I mean, I've already done this. I walked through this. I provided this. I granted this. Why would you feel that way?" So now my wife feels even more.

We need to learn to acknowledge the hurt. "I wounded you. I hurt you, brother. Forgive me. I have sinned against God. I have sinned against you. Here's specifically what I have done. I'm so sorry. I know this can't be easy to hear. I know this has to be frustrating at many levels. Please forgive me."

5. *Accept the consequences.* It's important that you hear me out on this. Reconciliation doesn't always end with the restoration of the relationship as it was before. Did you hear me? Reconciliation doesn't necessarily mean there's a restoration of the relationship like it was before. Do you understand that?

6. *Alter your behavior.* When Ken Sande says this, it kind of grates against the grace in me. I've spent so many years going, "It's not about behavioral modification; it's about a transformation of the heart. It's about God giving us a new heart that leads to new behavior." So when this brother says, "Change your behavior," I'm like, "Uh! Golly." So let me kind of unpack how I believe this works in order for grace to flourish between our relationships with one another.

When you're altering your behavior, you're showing someone you're serious about getting out of the cycle you've been walking in. How many of you have confessed the same sin against the same person repeatedly? My poor kids can probably say my plea for forgiveness back to me word for word for how I do it. Literally, little Audrey... She has my quick wit (God help us). She can almost start to mouth what I'm saying when I'm asking her to forgive me. It has happened that often.

What has happened historically... When Lauren and I were going through our rough patch the first seven years of marriage, it finally got to the point where I was like, "Please forgive me," and she was like, "Please forgive me," and then we both set out to get some help. Now do I still have to apologize to Lauren, oftentimes, for the same things I was apologizing for the first year of marriage? Yes.

But she has watched me seriously pursue through accountability, through biblical counseling and going through the steps, and then watching her go through the steps, go through biblical counseling, and find mentors, a seriousness about putting our sins to death, about seeing that behavior modified under the grace and beauty of God. We alter our behavior.

7. *Ask for forgiveness.* "Please forgive me." Now here's the big question...*What if they say no?* What if we do all of this, we address everyone involved, there are no *ifs*, *buts*, or *maybes*, we're very specific, we acknowledge our hurt, we promise to seek to grow out of that behavior, and we ask for forgiveness, and they go, "I just don't think I can give it to you"? That's real world stuff, isn't it? "I just don't think I can give it to you."

Here's what you do. Are you ready? You bless them and you move on. "When it is possible, as far as it

depends on you, live at peace with all men." You have owned your sin before God and you have owned your sin before them. There's nothing more you can do except pray and continue to pursue the transforming work of grace in your own heart, in your own life, to learn from your sin and move forward into what the Lord has for you, praying that, in time, God will grant to them the ability to forgive.

"What if he doesn't?" What can you do about it? "Chandler, that's tough. That's really hard for me." I know. Sin is awful. Sin breaks stuff. It's not a game. Can things be restored and made right? Yes. I absolutely believe they can over time. Is it going to happen as quickly as you want? Probably not. It doesn't take away from the weight of this reality that as a son or daughter of God you are to take seriously your pursuit of reconciliation and the making of amends with those you have sinned against.

Let's end our time this way. Why don't you bow your heads and close your eyes with me? Nothing weird is about to happen. I just think this will be easier for us to process if we're not as distracted. If you would say, "Matt, before God... Not before you. You don't really matter. I'm about to leave here. But before God right now, I am aware I have sinned against someone." If that's you, would you just raise your hand? "I have sinned against someone. I know it. I have hurt them." Praise God. Keep your hands up for a second. You should be bold in this. God knows. You're not surprising anybody.

Now here at Flower Mound, close to 85 percent of this room just raised their hands. Think about the drama and the stress here. I don't even know what happened at the other three campuses. I mean, think of the drama and stress just right here. What might God do if we took seriously his Word and began to make calls and set up meetings and set up cups of coffee and breakfasts and got ready to go to group in order to make amends with brothers and sisters we have sinned against?

"You don't understand!" I don't have to understand. I know it's complex. I know it's messy. I'm not asking you to untangle all the mess. I'm saying the Word of God says, "Own your sin." Before God and before others, own your sin. Seek out reconciliation. Seek out amends. Own all that you can. Be prepared for those who will not grant forgiveness or won't even be gracious in your seeking out that forgiveness. Have your heart prepared for that.

Go in hoping for the best, expecting maybe there not to be the type of reaction you had hoped for, but seek this out. Own your sin. Guard against the platforming of accusation. No one makes you sin; you sin because your heart is wicked. Rest in God's vertical love for you. Might we become a church that is known by outsiders for our love for one another, our patience for one another, our grace for one another? Why would it be hard to extend that? So much of it has been extended to us in Christ. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women, an opportunity today to just sit under your Word, to be captivated and compelled and controlled by your love for us, Jesus. I pray that love would compel us, that we wouldn't regard anyone according to the flesh, but rather, with new eyes and new hearts as new creations, as ambassadors of restoration and reconciliation, God, I pray we would walk out in seeking reconciliation for those we have sinned against.

For some of us, it'll be on the car ride home as we confess to spouses. For some of us, the circle might go out wider than that. It's going to create some phone calls and some meetings this week that'll need to take place, some face-to-face get-togethers with people. Some of us (God help us) haven't seen people in years, but we just know we've sinned against them. We need to own that, Holy Spirit, because you're putting them on our minds and on our hearts now.

Would you grant us the courage to seek out and make amends with those we have sinned against? Ultimately, we have sinned against you, God. Forgive us. We have broken faith in you, and that ripple effect has created us walking in pride, foolishness, and arrogance, without compassion and grace, and we have wounded your sons and daughters. Forgive us and grant us the courage to make amends. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Love you guys.

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