

Working Through Offense & Toward Reconciliation

“Take Courage Dear Hearts”

1. Deep Hurt, Suffering, & Injustice of Racism is Becoming More Visible & its Channels Exposed
2. Conversations Are Happening that Many Have Never Experienced in their Lifetime
3. *“Greater is He that is in us, then he that is in the world”* **(1 John 4:4)**
4. Hopelessness is Transforming into Hope

I want to encourage you to not let any offense you might have to drive your emotions or actions at this time. If someone has hurt you with what they have said, or something they posted on social media, or if you're simply afraid there might be offense, and don't know how to go about having a conversation, do what Jesus clearly commands:

Matthew 18:15-17

“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.

This Responsibility is Always Yours

Mark 11:25

But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too.

Matthew 5:23-24

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Most of the major problems we face today, both in and outside the church, are because people don't follow His prescription. They're too afraid to bring it up – it's scary, uncomfortable, awkward, painful – and just a lot of hard work. But, if you refuse, you unwittingly sow the seeds of division and resentment, and those seeds have deep, deep roots

1. Humble Yourself

Let me say something that I really need you to personally hear and consider. I know you will agree with the points I make below... My goal in sharing this is not so you'll say *“Oh I agree with that Pastor Lee, and that is how I try to live my life...”* That is not enough.

My goal is not just that you will agree in principle -- and think because you agree that you are living according to these truths. My goal is that you will humbly acknowledge that YOU fall terribly short in these areas...that WE ALL fall terribly short in these areas...and that YOU MUST look deeply within yourself, and allow the Holy Spirit to show you where you are WEAK and IN NEED OF MUCH TRAINING. Because of this, I ask YOU to be patient with others that differ with you and BE GENEROUS IN GIVING GRACE to each other.

2. First, Genuinely Listen to Others

James 1:19-20

Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.

There are multiple legitimate perspectives in all of this...**try hard — and I mean really work hard at having humility and intentionally** —to see it through your beloved brothers' and sisters' eyes, not just the lens you grew up seeing it through.

- **Blind Spots**

- It's not a question of If – You have them! -- You don't know what you don't know.

- **Assumptions**

- **We ALL make ASSUMPTIONS we don't realize we've made...**and we ALL develop thoughts, actions, and bias based on those incorrect assumptions.
- **BELIEVE in your brother and sister and neighbor even when you don't understand their perspective at all (1 Cor. 13:6).**

- **For the Sake of Empathy and Compassion**

- ***“There's no way I could ever know what it's like to be a black person in this country...”***

- *Do you want to know?*
- *Do others matter enough to you to do the hard work of understanding their hurt, and being willing to help them shoulder it?*
- *Do you realize that the essence of the “law of Christ” is to help others carry their hurt, pain, and suffering?*

- **Galatians 6:2-3**

Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.

Philippians 2:3-4

Consider others and their needs (their hurts &frustrations) as **more important than you and yours.**

- **This is the self-less center of the Gospel.**
- To be a follower of Jesus is always to serve the other first (in listening, in compassion, in understanding, and in action).

3. Don't let the devil's clever and demonic use of social media or human politics bait you into inappropriate and hurtful discussions that can fuel anxiety and create such widespread hurt through misunderstanding (stay away from it!)

- **The world does not need your expert political or social opinions...**
 - Often uninformed, narrow, and reactionary...**(Proverbs 18:2)**
- **It does not need to know what you had for breakfast, or your latest selfie...**
- **The world needs hope...it needs peace...it needs the love of God...**
 - Stop wasting time on highlighting / branding / showcasing YOU!
 - Be an overflow of the Fruit of the Spirit

Philippians 4:8

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

Ephesians 4:29

Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

Philippians 2:12, 14-15

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear... **Do everything without complaining and arguing**, so that no one can criticize you. **Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.**

Have **real, encouraging, blessing-focused** conversations with real people on the phone or zoom or in person...it then becomes so much more human for all of us...and **we remember compassion, gentleness, patience and kindness as we hear the voice and/or look into the eyes of another.**

4. In ALL You Say or Do, Remember Your End Goal and Purpose as a Christian is Reconciliation

2 Cor. 5:18-20

God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us.

If you have offense -- go to them now, and in love and humility - don't wait - work through it. Your friendship and your work in the Kingdom depend on it. **Be willing and grateful to do the hard work of relationship building in Christ. Nothing is more important!**

1. Sermons will Intentionally Share from Different Perspectives (white, black, other...).
2. I am assembling a packet of articles, suggested readings, movies, media to expose you to more material regarding *Racial Reconciliation* that will be helpful in empathizing and walking with those whose experiences and perspectives are different from yours.
3. We will continue to unpack and fine tune our abilities in following Jesus' prescription of Overcoming Offense and working as Ambassadors Toward Reconciliation.