



Voices
Dave Gibbons

Opening Prayer: God, help us to be open to hearing from you today. Move in our hearts and be notably present in our conversation.

Talk It Over: This week's talk started by Pastor Dave Gibbons telling us about his recent interest in taking up painting. He felt pulled towards the idea of painting, and then eventually tried it. Pastor Dave went on to share that his practice quickly left him realizing painting was not what he thought it would be. He concluded that he liked the idea of painting, but he did not actually like painting.

This is a feeling many of us probably know firsthand in some way — the idea of something, whatever that something is, sounds attractive, but the actual thing involves more effort, work, and sweat than we desire.

- Inaccurate expectations about life, relationships, people, work, an interest, or any other normal life thing, can easily create more conflict, stress, hurt or trouble in life. Have you found yourself attracted to the idea of a relationship, job, belief, habit, interest, risk, decision, or situation, only to find yourself disillusioned as you got closer? What caused the inaccurate expectations? Share about that journey, and how you handled the gap between what you thought and wanted, and what the reality was.

Read Luke 17:1-4

While it's a normal and valid human to feel shocked, outraged, angry, vengeful, critical, or deeply grieved about being offended, especially by someone you expected more from, Jesus invites us to behave in grace-filled ways when conflict comes. More specifically, through various Bible passages, Jesus encourages us to rebuke our offender — or to give a warning to prevent something wrong. This should be done in love and truth, and the goal is that the offender, offended, and the relationship should benefit.

- Pastor Dave shared the familiar saying, "Hurt people, hurt people." Have you ever experienced or observed this truth in your own life? How could this simple truth help us behave and process in grace-filled ways?
- Have you ever hurt someone out of your own hurt? Share about that experience.
- Our human, biological driven response to either fight-or-flight can serve a healthy purpose, but sometimes we can become stunted if we let fight-or-flight become our default response at the first sign of conflict. Looking at your past, would you say your default is fight or flight and avoid additional conflict at all cost? Where and why did you learn this? What sorts of problems has this default created for you?

Read Ephesians 4:15 (NIV)

Turning towards an offender with grace and truth can be very difficult — especially when emotions are high, or we are feeling angry or sad. Too much truth and too little grace often creates more conflict, and keeps the offender and relationship from restoration. But, on one hand, avoiding truth often doesn't leave us feeling good, or move the offender or the relationship to restoration either.

- Share about a time you engaged, confronted, or rebuked an offender with too much grace or truth, and you felt like restoration was compromised. Explain what you observed or learned.
- Share about a time you engaged, confronted or rebuked an offender with healthy amounts of grace and truth, and you felt like restoration was accomplished. What did grace and truth look like? How did things move forward? What role did the other person play in this restoration process?
- When dealing with very unhealthy people there is sometimes no way to move a relationship forward well without changing how the relationship works. Share about a time you had to change the way a relationship worked because the situation, person, or relationship was too unhealthy, dysfunctional, or even dangerous. Did this help you embrace forgiveness or make it harder? Why is that the case for you?
- When you're the offender, how can you help make things right by embracing grace and truth?
 - *Disclaimer: As we continue to explore this topic of grace, truth, forgiveness and offenses, be open to seeing your faults more clearly too. Consider being open to doing what you can to aid restoration, no matter how recent or long ago your offense was.*

Re-read Luke 17:1-4 and Read Luke 17:5-6

Forgiveness can be difficult and complicated, especially when serious offenses are at hand or we are not genuinely interested in forgiving. Regardless of where we are in the process of forgiveness, our faith — even the mere presence of faith — can help us.

- Share about a time forgiveness came surprisingly easy for you. How did your faith help you in this situation? What were some notable factors about this situation that may have made forgiveness more simple?
- Share about a time forgiveness was hard to give. How did your faith help you in this situation? What were some notable factors about this situation that may have made forgiveness more difficult or complicated? You may be in process still, and that is completely okay. God meets us in the trenches of our journey.
- Pastor Dave Gibbons encouraged us to ask God for 'unoffendable hearts'. What would this look like for you? What are key characteristics you imagine this type of person need to have? How would this person implement boundaries and wisdom, while maintaining their 'unoffendable heart'?
- Looking at your own heart, and the details shared in the question above, what are some specific ways you want to change on your journey of growing unoffendable heart'?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16 (The Message)

Take three minutes to quietly consider with God what your next right step is on this topic of grace, truth, forgiveness and offenses, whether you are the offender or the offended, or the wound is recent or in the distant past. Is there something you need to do, say, or consider to help you walk in freedom? Are there boundaries you need to place, remove or change? Patterns of thinking you need to replace or tweak? Wounds that you've denied or need healing? Is there an offense, offender or relationship you need to bring more truth or grace too? An offender you need to engage? Or maybe you committed an offense and need to own your wrong doing with grace and truth. Be open to hearing anything from God — and remember, God is a God of compassion, wisdom, grace and love so you can trust his words will be healing and helpful for you personally.

Closing Prayer: God, there are few topics more difficult than grace, truth, forgiveness, and offenses. We are grateful that you meet us in the trenches of real life — whether we are quick to forgive or struggling to forgive. Help us to live with realistic expectations, and unoffendable hearts. Help us to live in truth and grace. Help us to live in the freedom that you offer.