



Thermal Nuclear Family Week Three

Important Note for All Group Members:

This week's talk might be sensitive for some people. Please use wisdom and caution when listening and responding to one another because this is one of those topics we need to be extra careful not to spend our time offering unsolicited solutions or judgments. This topic is complicated, hard, and emotionally charged. We want this to be a safe circle for people to share and process where they are and where we reflect Jesus to one another simply by being present with each other in loving and grace filled ways.

Opening Prayer:

God, you know what you want us to get out of this together. We pray for your will to prevail in gentle and powerful ways here today. Help us to reflect Jesus to one another.

Talk It Over:

While reconciliation can be difficult, hard, and complicated, it's possible. Share about a reconciliation story you've seen or experienced.

A common and dangerous lie we can sometimes grow to believe is that we don't care about the hurt, pain, and problems we've experienced in relationships that are important to us — like our family or close friends.

- Have you ever seen someone else believe, or try to believe, the "I don't care" lie? What was that experience like for you?
- In general, when conflict comes up with people we care about, are you able to own when you are hurt? If not, where in the process do you generally camp out? For example, instead of feeling the hurt do you get stuck at anger, minimize, deny, shifting the focus, suppressing the hurt, or whatever.

At this time read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (NIV) in it's entirety. As we move through the questions below, we will be revisiting this passage in smaller chunks.

This passage of the Bible starts with the words, "For Christ's love compels us..."

- Is there a relationship or person you'd like to feel more drawn or compelled to love, care for, forgive, reconcile with?

(Continued on next page.)

2 Corinthians 5:18 (NIV) tells us: All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ...

While it's easy to see the important part we play in our relationship with God, it's important we don't lose sight of the fact that our perfect, holy, and righteous God initiated the connection with us. God not only made the first move, he extended an open invite. He removed every obstacle in the reconciliation process, and simply left us with the choice to engage or not. There is nothing standing between us and God, but we make the choice to engage and connect.

- Who in your life have you been able to forgive well or extend grace to? What was that process like?
- Who in your life have you had a hard time forgiving or extending grace to? What was or has the process been like? What makes this situation difficult to reconcile?

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (NIV) tells us: All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

It's important to remember that God initiated forgiveness, love, and a relationship with us, in spite of our sin, brokenness, and imperfection. God did not extend grace because we deserved it per say, but because he saw more value in the connection. He has forgiven, loved, and chosen us because of his desire for restoration and relationship.

- Take a few minutes to silently reflect on all the issues, hang ups, brokenness, sins, and problems you bring to the table that God has chosen to forgive, extend grace to, and see past. Try to see yourself honestly while being conscious of the fact that God has chosen to love you with ultimate grace and forgiveness. When a few minutes has passed, consider sharing about your experience.

If we are not careful, as a Jesus follower, our unintended message can be this: You can be reconciled to God in spite of your sin, but you can't be reconciled to me because of your sin.

- Have you ever been the recipient of this sort of message? Tell about that experience and how it impacted you.
- What words do you think Jesus would have said to the message sender? What words would you have liked to have shared with the sender?
- Have you ever been the sender of a "You can be reconciled to God in spite of your sin, but you can't be reconciled to me because of your sin." message? Why did you send this message? What motivated your message? What does this relationship look like now?

2 Corinthians 5:20-21 (NIV) tells us: We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- Looking at your heart and story, is there anyone you've written off relationally who you may want to extend reconciliation to? If you haven't shared already, what went wrong in this relationship in the first place? What can do now about that given situation to make things right? In what specific ways can you extend grace and forgiveness too? What do you think your your next step might be? Remember, reconciliations doesn't mean the relationship has to return to how it was previously. A reconciled relationship may mean new boundaries, rhythms, patterns of relating, and so on.

Closing Prayer: For this week's closing prayer, have someone pray for every person by name. If possible pray a sentence or two about that person's current reconciliation goal, hope, and desire.