



Week Three

Opening Praying

God, you know us and love us. Help us to hear from you and to be honest about the ways we can grow.

Talk It Over

This week's talk centered on how we impact our relationships based on how we interpret the other people's action or communication.

- Share about a pointless, foolish, or dumb fight you've created — or regularly create — because of the way you chose to interpret someone else's actions or words. *(Keep this story light. We hit the more serious stuff down below.)*

Read John 13:35

As receivers or listeners, our interpretation of the sender's action or communication greatly impacts the relational distance between us. A negative interpretation will widen the gap between us and the sender; a positive interpretation closes the gap between us and the sender. Going further, as believers, there is significant value in being the type of people who intentionally chooses to close the gap.

- Share about a time you've hurt someone, damaged a relationship, or pushed someone away by interpreting their actions and communication in a negative light.
- Without sharing the other person's name, share about a time you were hurt by someone interpreting your actions or communication in a negative way.
- Share about a time you intentionally chose to close the gap between you and a sender by choosing to interpret an action or message in a positive light.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NLT)

The Bible teaches us that love gives the benefit of the doubt, it chooses hope over suspicion, and it admits our interpretation may lack information. In other words, as listeners and receivers, love assigns the best motive. Love is generous with its interpretations. Love assumes others are innocent until proven guilty. And love attempts to see others in the best possible light.

Disclaimer: If you're dealing with an abuser or an addict, this is a very different conversation. Please seek wise, biblical help.

- Based on the ideas listed above, more often than not, are you a loving receiver or not? Why do you think that is the case?
- If you find yourself gravitating towards negative interpretation, are you aware of something from your past that creates this pattern of negativity?
- Think about a relationship you regularly experience conflict in. How is this idea of interpretation coming into play? **(Continued on the next page.)**

Read Ephesians 4:3 (NLT) and Psalm 25:8 (MSG)

The bottom line of this week's talk is that a favorable interpretation helps keep us united and helps us to walk in love. As the receiver, we can choose our interpretation. The sender makes their own choice, but our response creates an environment where unity and love is possible.

- Do you know someone who seems skilled at being a loving and gracious receiver? Share a bit about your observations with the group.
- Looking back at our conversation and the various verses and teachings we covered, what are some general tools or tactics we can use to help you interpret others in a more loving way?
- Share how you specifically would like to grow in this area. What is your next right step?

Challenge: If this is an area of life you struggle with, consider sharing the struggle directly with someone you care about and too often interpret in a negative way. Consider telling them sorry, acknowledge that you see your pattern, and how you hope to grow and change.

- If this challenge resonates with you, tell us about your plan.

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for loving us enough to help us grow. Help us to remain open to becoming more loving people. Help us to be the kind of people who are good at closing the gap relationally and building unity.