

Coffee Table Questions:

Are there any areas of un-forgiveness you need to resolve “before coming to the altar” i.e. before the next time you take Communion?

How well do you forgive yourself, how well do you forgive others?
What does your attitude to forgiveness tell you about your own spiritual maturity?

Personal reflection: *“Lord please show me those areas I’m unaware of, where you want to apologise for hurt I may have caused.”*



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Relationships Matter

GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Craig Wood



Part of the 'Growing Together'
Discipleship Stream

**Solihull
Christian
Fellowship**



Forgiveness - doing it well.

Relationships Matter

GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Bibliography:

1. **The Sunday Times, 3 June 2018:** “Jonathan Aitken: I prayed in jail with blaggers, dippers and kitters. Now I’m going to be God’s man inside.” (<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/jonathan-aitken-i-prayed-in-jail-with-blaggers-dippers-and-kitters-now-im-going-to-be-gods-man-inside-9w2t272ks?shareToken=2f52a86abff3ab76ea42f9c910c17f95>)
2. **Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)** (http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/):
3. **The Christward Collective, “Freely forgiven, freely forgive”** (<http://www.alliancenet.org/christward/freely-forgiven-freely-forgive#.WxZ6NC-ZO3U>)
4. **Willow Creek Association, Emotionally Healthy Leadership Conference 2014,** “Forgiveness - The most difficult spiritual discipline”, Pete Scazzero (<http://willowcreek.org.uk/uncategorised/forgiveness-the-most-difficult-spiritual-discipline-pete-scazzero/>):
5. **“Sit, Walk, Stand”: Watchman Nee**, CLC Publications:
6. **Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals**, “The battle is won through forgiveness, restoration” (<https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/alliance-of-confessing-evangelicals/read/articles/battle-is-won-through-forgiveness-restoration-11009.html>)
7. **Baptist Times, 14May2017:** David Kerrigan: “Forgiveness, restoration, inclusion.” (https://www.baptist.org.uk/mobile/default.aspx?group_id=220493&article_id=497546)



R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r
G O D ' S D E S I R E F O R A C O M M U N I T Y O F B E L I E V E R S

Scope & Context:

Relationships Matter

GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Introduction:

“children attain to the responsibility of sons in the measure in which they manifest kinship of spirit and of attitude with their Father.....

We sit forever with Christ that we may walk continuously before men. Forsake for a moment our place of rest in Him, and immediately we are tripped, and our testimony in the world is marred. But abide in Christ and our position there ensures the power to walk worthy of Him here..... Our conduct and behaviour depend fundamentally upon our inward rest in Christ.”

Watchman Nee, “Sit Walk Stand”



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Summary:

Forgiveness is an essential element of loving each other;

The extent to which we are able to forgive is a mark of our spiritual maturity;

Forgiveness is a spiritual discipline; we need to practice it and to exercise it;

Confession, forgiveness and restoration are essential within an authentic healthy Christian community - which is God's desire for His church family here at SCF.



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

The Lord's prayer:

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

2Cor5:18-20 NIVUK



R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r
G O D ' S D E S I R E F O R A C O M M U N I T Y O F B E L I E V E R S

“Doing relationships”:

“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” Matt6:14-15 NIV

“A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John13:34-35 NIVUK

Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

“Doing relationships”:

- It’s impossible for us to love one another as Jesus loves us UNLESS we move in His strength and not in our own;
- Unless we are truly able to forgive one another then we cannot love one another;
- The extent to which we are able to forgive is an indication of The Holy Spirit’s work within us.



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Case Study:

Jonathan Aitken:

- Conviction for perjury brought the ex-Tory minister Jonathan Aitken notoriety. It also inspired his new calling as a prison chaplain;
- Aitken found God while serving seven months in prison for perjury in 1999 after he sued The Guardian for libel;
- He has described persuading his then teenage daughter to give him a false alibi as his *“most shameful mistake”*;
- *“cells can be great places to pray”*.



R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r
G O D ' S D E S I R E F O R A C O M M U N I T Y O F B E L I E V E R S

Theology:

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646):

Peacemaking is NOT about Cowardice:

- NOT Avoiding;
- NOT Appeasing;
- NOT Running from from the problem or giving in.



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Theology:

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646):

Peacemaking is NOT about Cowardice:

- NOT Avoiding;
- NOT Appeasing;
- NOT Running from from the problem or giving in.



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Theology:

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646):

XIII Of Sanctification:

“...by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and **the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified**; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Theology:

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646):

XIII Of Sanctification contd/:

“This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence arises a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.”



R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r

GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Theology:

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646):

XIII Of Sanctification contd/:

“In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part does overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r

GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Theology:

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646):

XIV Of Saving Faith:

“..the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.”

R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r

GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Theology:

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646):

XV Of Repentance unto Life:

I. Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the Gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ.”



R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r
G O D ' S D E S I R E F O R A C O M M U N I T Y O F B E L I E V E R S

Theology:

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646):

XV Of Repentance unto Life contd/:

“As there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation; so there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent.”



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Theology:

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646):

XV Of Repentance unto Life contd/:

“Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man's duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins, particularly.”



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Theology:

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646):

XV Of Repentance unto Life contd/:

“As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof; upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy; so he that scandaliseth his brother, or the Church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended; who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him.”



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Theology:

“forgiveness is the most difficult spiritual discipline.”

Robert Mulholland, theologian and retired New Testament professor of Asbury Theological Seminary



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Practical outworking:

For us to be able to really forgive someone has to be gift of God.

To truly forgive is to share a gift that God has freely given to us.



R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r

GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Scriptural perspective:

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Eph4:32 NIV.

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matt5:48
NIV

“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Eph5:1-2 NIV.

Relationships Matter
GOD’S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Scriptural perspective:

“We sit forever with Christ that we may walk continuously before men. Forsake for a moment our place of rest in Him, and immediately we are tripped, and our testimony in the world is marred. But abide in Christ and our position there ensure the power to walk worthy of Him here..... Our conduct and behaviour depend fundamentally upon our inward rest in Christ.”

Watchman Nee



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Within the body of Christ:

- True forgiveness requires us to face up to what has happened;
- Forgiveness isn't tolerating wrong;
- The alternative is that we will carry the load of un-forgiveness;
- Satan's paralysing stranglehold depends on our acceptance of his lies.



R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r
G O D ' S D E S I R E F O R A C O M M U N I T Y O F B E L I E V E R S

Confession:

- We are called to confess our sins to each other;
- Confession: an important element of forgiveness;
- Seeking God together whenever there may be a problem.

R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

The purpose of forgiveness:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

1Cor13:4-8: NIV

Relationships Matter

GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

The purpose of forgiveness:

- To restore our relationship - to bring about reconciliation;
- Love always hopes;
- Often we need help to forgive;
- Don't settle for second best.

The process of forgiveness should always bear witness to a community of authentic disciples of Jesus Christ.



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Responding to the sins of others:

- Grief;
- Realism;
- Self examination;
- Forgiveness & reconciliation;
- New discipline.

R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r

GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

The Cross & Communion:

*“whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you **proclaim the Lord’s death** until he comes.” 1Cor11:26 NIVUK*

The Cross: three key aspects:

- forgiveness;
- complete healing;
- inclusion.



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

The Cross & Communion:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matt11:28-30: NIVUK

- All are welcome in God's eyes.
- *"let us proclaim the Lord's death":*
 - let that proclamation speak of forgiveness for sinful people;
 - let that proclamation speak of restoration for broken people;
 - let that proclamation speak of inclusion for isolated people.

R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r
G O D ' S D E S I R E F O R A C O M M U N I T Y O F B E L I E V E R S

Summary:

Forgiveness is an essential element of loving each other;

The extent to which we are able to forgive is a mark of our spiritual maturity;

Forgiveness is a spiritual discipline; we need to practice it and to exercise it;

Confession, forgiveness and restoration are essential within an authentic healthy Christian community - which is God's desire for His church family here at SCF.



Relationships Matter
GOD'S DESIRE FOR A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

Coffee Table Questions:

Are there any areas of un-forgiveness you need to resolve “before coming to the altar” i.e. before the next time you take Communion?

How well do you forgive yourself, how well do you forgive others?
What does your attitude to forgiveness tell you about your own spiritual maturity?

Personal reflection: *“Lord please show me those areas I’m unaware of, where you want to apologise for hurt I may have caused.”*



R e l a t i o n s h i p s M a t t e r
G O D ' S D E S I R E F O R A C O M M U N I T Y O F B E L I E V E R S

