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Preaching Today—Our Pastor
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Longing for the Grace to Live & Give the Biblical Art of Forgiveness

1. So who do you want to imitate? The world that doesn't forgive? Or the way of leadership & discipleship to which Jesus Christ calls you today?
2. A divorced person may have to forgive her estranged husband, and then on another status than that of husband & wife, offer a new beginning—in her interior life and her exterior life.
3. A child, perhaps a very old child, angry at a parent, needs to forgive a parent already dead, and then that forgiveness has to have a new beginning with the memory of a parent now gone.

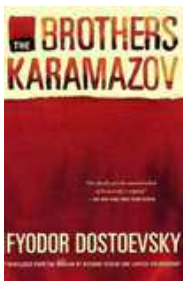
4. Are you experiencing God's love in the culture of the Bellefield church community? If not, is it a matter of your harboring unforgiveness? To give forgiveness is transformational in that it opens you to feel God's love, as well as opens you to convey God's love to others in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Not to forgive cuts that off. Will you fall to your knees now and trust God's pleasure upon your life in the sometimes painful act of giving forgiveness? Of opening your hand and saying, "I want to be your wife again, your husband again, your _____ again. (You fill in the blank.)"

7. The Gospel removes the risk of forgiveness in the Godward direction & frees us for leadership & discipleship in transformational grace to others.

"...and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin...If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7-9). There's no gamble with God here. Due to the Cross of Jesus, the Cross of His shared pain with the Father over our sin, the Cross of His perfect confession for our sins, His perfect forgiveness, and His guarantee to open His hand and say, *I offer*

you a new beginning.

Jesus does not simply excuse or forget our sin, but remembers it and still opens His hand to us, fully knowing we are yet going to sin again and again today and tomorrow against Him. What grace to give what He gives to you, to another. That's transformational leadership & discipleship that glorifies Jesus. It's kind of like *The Brothers Karamazov* of Russian literature....



"There is One Who can...."

Worship & Adore God the Trinity

5/17/09

Bellefield Presbyterian Church

Connect with Today's Sermon

Spring 2009 Sermon Series:

"Transformational Leadership & Discipleship" Part 2: *The Biblical Art of Forgiveness—God's Transformational Factor for Experiencing Love*

Sermon Moves @ a Glance

- What is this miracle of forgiveness?
 - We all need to forgive and be forgiven.
1. Close Biblical connection between confession & forgiveness;
 2. See what confessing sin is not;
 3. See that confession includes 3 clear ownings;
 4. See now what forgiveness is not;
 5. See forgiveness as a new beginning; See this in
 6. Christ's Cross.

1 John 1:1-10

Verse 9 here says, **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** Add to this, **Colossians 3:13,** **"bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you**

also must forgive."

When you put these 2 together, you must ask, "What then really happens to you when someone you have hurt turns to you and says, *I forgive you.*" What happens to you when you say, *I forgive you.*" What is this miracle of forgiveness?



Caption describing picture or

We all need to forgive & be forgiven

If you want that above question to haunt you in a new and powerful way, you need only attend to Michael Christopher's dramatic play, *The Black Angel*. It's a play about a former

German Nazi General whose name was Engle, who after 30 years in prison sentenced by the Nuremberg war crimes trial, was now trying to make a new beginning for himself in France....

1. First notice the close Biblical connection between confessing and forgiving.



Confessing & forgiving hang together in Christ

1 John 1:8 “If we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins....” Now we must not put more content into this than it says. The text does not say if you do *not* confess, He will *not* forgive. No, it only says that if we do confess, we are

assured God will forgive in Jesus. So, what God does with unconfessed sin in our lives, we can leave to the mystery of His unlimited mercy, as well as His just wrath covered by our belief in Christ. But this we can seize onto: *if we do confess, He surely forgives.*

2. We must see what confessing sin is NOT.

“But what is confession? And what is forgiveness? To get an answer to these 2 Q’s is to hear the promise of the Word of God in grace.”

1 John 1:8—“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves....” 3 things confession is not: 1] It is not *talking about sin*; 2] Confessing sin is not the same as *explaining it*; and 3] Confessing sin is not the same as merely *being realistic about it*. No, we can’t let ourselves be deceived into minimizing its content/impact.

3. We must soberly see what confessing sin includes: 3 clear ownings.

1 John 1:8—“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” So what’s the truth about confessing sin? 3 clear ownings of God’s Word have to grip us to define true confession: 1] we own clear acknowledgement of our responsibility; 2] we own a shared pain with the person we offended; and 3] we own up to the fact that our sin confession to another human being is a gamble on grace.



Tess hoped in her husband’s grace & lost....

4. About forgiveness, we must first see what forgiving is NOT.

1 John 1:10 “If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar; and His Word is not in us.” Well, as with confession, we can’t fudge on forgiveness, either. Here, as well as on a wider Biblical framework, God Who is not a liar, let’s us see

that yes, we have sinned and been sinned against. So forgiveness 1] is not *forgetting*. If God could have forgotten, He would not have needed a Cross. And 2] forgiving is not *excusing*. No, that’s an end run around the pain and challenge of forgiveness.

5. We must see, we must love & give forgiveness as a new beginning.

Notice the flow and power of **1 John 1:7**—“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” What kind of *new beginning* is

this then? It is an odd one that starts where *we are* & starts where *they are*, not where we all wish we were. For we still need His blood *ongoing* to cleanse us even as we walk in the light; forgiveness just does not guarantee a pain-free future this side of heaven.

6. Will you open & hold out this transformational hand?

Holy Spirit, come, be upon us! Soul, will you say to that one who needs it most: “I cannot *excuse* what you’ve done; I cannot *understand* what you’ve done; I cannot *forget* what you have done, but here’s my

hand; I want to be your friend again; your husband again; your wife again; I want to be your father again; I want to be your son again. Oh, yes.” Oh, church, say this to that one! Do this for Jesus, for you, for them....

“What then is the miracle that happens after confession is made? When one confesses & the other forgives? When a hurting person forgives the person who hurt her?”



Will you open this & forgive?