

Stories from the Field

- harsh words. Begin to say (and mean) what children say—words like: *please, may I? thank you, I'm sorry, I forgive you*, and of course, *I love you*. Childlike qualities are qualities of humility. They are qualities of Christ. It's not without reason we are called God's children. (CS)

Biblical Principle: In our fast-moving, pressurized world, we need to come back again to what truly matters—to the qualities of childlike humility. We need to lose greatness in the eyes of the world, and maybe even confronted with our sin, to become truly great in the kingdom of heaven. HUA
? Question: *Do you know what Greatness God is calling you to?*

DO | What are you going to do about it?

2 Cor 12:7

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a Messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from exalting myself!

- Most Christians have yet to experience the depth of Christ's power. Why? Because they haven't admitted their weaknesses and they haven't expressed gratitude for them. A thorn is a limitation I've inherited or cannot change, something that causes me pain and limits my ministry. Some thorns are temporary in our lives. Some thorns are removed gradually. Some you have for a lifetime, as with Paul.
- A thorn causes me pain, gets my attention, keeps me dependent upon God, and humble before him. It acts as a governor on my life. It guides and directs me, and it motivates me. It may be physical, relational, emotional, or some other kind of thorn, but it will come because it prevents arrogance, and it guarantees God's help.
- One of the dangers of strength is that it breeds an independent spirit.* God made us to value each other, and our weaknesses keep us from being self-sufficient so that we lean into God. (RW)

Biblical Principle: God allows adversity in our life of ministry to humble us, develop our character but also show His Glory as he works through our weaknesses. HUA?

Question: *What pain is God using in your life for dependency?*
Application: Who is God calling you to - to reach out and serve?

Standing Firm in the Christian Life means loving until it hurts! Love, in its highest and purest form, isn't interested in temporary satisfaction: it has eternal goals in mind. It's concerned with another person's wellbeing, godliness, and spiritual growth. It's ready to expand itself for the good of the believer in the glory of God.

First, loving until it hurts means loving others enough to serve them sacrificially, to love them without limit. Christ loved them to the fullest, to the absolute maximum of his divine capacity. We should readily humble ourselves to meet the needs of others. **Our readiness to humbly serve and lovingly sacrifice is a testimony to our savior.** We need to set aside our prominence and pride to serve sacrificially those we see in need, we must be ready to give up our time, our priorities, our social standing, our comfort, and even our lives and care for others. Loving it till it hurts means loving others enough to sacrifice everything we have - including ourselves.

Second, loving until it hurts means our love must not only be sacrificial but also sanctifying. Man has an inability to achieve God's holy standard – all men need God's grace. **A sanctifying love is a love that builds up, that takes sin seriously, that loves and promotes the body of Christ, and that, when necessary, confronts the sin in its mist.** Showing sanctifying love to one another in God's family means we recognize Christ in each other, and that we love and serve one another accordingly. Christ commands us to protect each other as well. **We need to love one another in a way that protects and promotes sanctification.** We need to watch out for the world's attempts to seduce us with what first John 2:16 describes as the lust of the flesh eyes in a beautiful pride of life. Judgment will fall on those who seduced the children of God and stifled their spiritual growth. Sin is so serious it must be dealt with drastically and thoroughly. Sanctifying love takes sin seriously. **Falling into sin destroys the believer's usefulness to the work of the**

Kingdom. It also corrupts his relationships, primarily with God but also with other believers. Showing sanctifying love means that like God, we are grieved when believers fall into sin. We need to faithfully confront those sinning believers out of sanctifying love, both for the sake of their spiritual growth and to preserve the purity of the church for the honor of the Lord!

Third, loving until it hurts means loving enough to suffer! *As we love as Christ loved, we will suffer emotionally for those we "witness" who fall away.* For, just like Paul was impaled in agony over what was happening in the church as he loved them, they returned His love with hostility and anger because they did not want to face their sins.

This is what it means to love until it hurts: we are willing to serve sacrificially, to sanctify, and to suffer. We can expect pain in this degree of love for others. **But it's a glorious pain, because God uses it to refine us into his image and sharpen us for the work of his Kingdom.**

Talk about it:

Question for contemplation and discussion: What did God enlighten to you in the text?

KNOW | What does God want us to know?

Phil 2:17

But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with all with you all.

- **We need to cultivate the same humility and willingness to expend and sacrifice ourselves for others.** "I rejoice" connects to the "since I am being poured out." **We need to view life as a sacrifice well pleasing to God. The greater the sacrifice, the greater the joy, the more supreme the offering the greater the exhilaration.** That's the bottom line. It is not joy in spite of, it is joy because of. And we will affirm in the testimony of Paul here that his greatest joy came at the time of his greatest sacrifice and the reason some of us know so little about that level of joy is because we know nothing about that level of sacrifice. His joy was in the sacrifice, his joy was in the offering

because that is that for which he lived. That's why he said "*I count not my life dear to myself. I just want to finish what the Lord gave me to do.*" **And his greatest joy came at the point of his greatest sacrifice because that was his greatest goal.**

- We get joy out of what we do for ourselves, we get some joy out of what we do for others as a satisfaction in feeding the hungry, helping the poor, whatever it might be, helping little children, sick people. **But how many of us are exhilarated with joy in the sacrifices we make for the cause of Christ?** What are you sacrificing in service to Christ? What amount of treasure, what amount of time, what are you sacrificing for the cause of Christ?

Biblical Principle: The reason we have such a discontent, unhappy society is because, and even among Christians, we are trying to find joy in possessions rather than in sacrifice where ultimate joy lies. And so we are chasing an illusion. **HUA**

Question: *What did God give you to do?*

BE | How does God want us to become more like Him?

Matthew 18:4-6

⁴ Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. ⁶ "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

- **Sanctifying love is a love that Builds up, that takes sin seriously, that loves and protects the body of Christ, and that, when necessary, confronts the sin in its midst.**
- Jesus selected *humility* from the character qualities of a child as the fundamental quality of greatness. Do you see a humble child as the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? We live in a world that values power, pride, money, and a quick wit. We need to ask God to deflate our ego, to release our grip on fierce competitiveness, and to soften our

RT Kindell Total Forgiveness!!

- Introduction
 - Have to make a decision – Peace or Bitterness
 - Primary way we grieve the Holy Spirit: foster bitterness in our heart
 - Daily commitment to forgive those who hurt me
 - Let them off the hook:
 - They won't get caught or found out
 - Nobody will ever know what they did
 - They will prosper and be blessed as if they had done no wrong
- Chapter 1 – What is Total Forgiveness
 - Forgiving those who have hurt our loved ones
 - The ultimate proof of total forgiveness
 - What impresses the world the most is changed lives for which there is no natural explanation
 - Our mandate is to forgive
 - 10 things total forgiveness is not & 10 things total forgiveness is
- Chapter 2 – How to know we have Totally Forgiven
 - Joseph and total forgiveness
 - Do not let anyone know & Do not allow anyone to be afraid of you or intimidated by you
 - Want them to forgive themselves and not feel guilty
 - Forgiveness is worthless to us emotionally if we can't forgive ourselves
 - Let them save face & Protect them from their greatest fear & Lifelong commitment & Pray for them to be blessed
- Chapter 3 - The Lord's Prayer and Forgiveness
 - Forgive us our debts & What is the purpose of the Lord's Prayer
 - Grieving the Holy Spirit & Being honest with ourselves
 - Total Forgiveness is a chosen privilege & What happens when we don't forgive?
 - How unforgiveness manifests itself & consequences of an unforgiving spirit
 - Holy Spirit is grieved
 - You are left to yourself
 - You force God to become your enemy
 - You lose the potential of your anointing
 - No authentic fellowship with the Father
- Chapter 4 – Playing God
 - Don't believe the devil, even when he tells you the truth.
 - What will you say: **NEED** Necessary, Encourage, Edify, Dignify
 - Being critical of others & Nathan and David
 - Judging is God's prerogative
 - God is listening, He knows the truth about us, and He is ruthlessly fair
- Chapter 5 – When we are Right to Judge
 - When it is right to correct behavior – Facing our own faults first
 - How to behave if someone criticizes us
 - Times we are permitted to judge
 - Removing our plank in a limited way
 - When we *can't* help another – when we *can* help another
- Chapter 6 – The Art of Forgiving and Forgetting
 - The dangers of keeping a record of wrongs
 - Letting go of a record of wrongs (in thoughts and words)
 - Refusing to keep a record of our rights
 - Jim Bakker's experience of letting go of wrongs
 - Forgiving ourselves – Signs that we haven't forgiven ourselves
 - Anger, True guilt vs Pseudoguilt (didn't sin in the first place and when sin has been forgiven)
 - Fear and not forgiving ourselves – Pride, self-righteousness, self-pity
 - Understanding guilt
- Chapter 7 – How to Forgive – Totally
 - Forgiving those who are not our enemies
 - What do we mean by having an enemy – the blessing of having an enemy
 - Loving our enemies & trying to justify our sin
 - Pragmatic reasons for forgiving
 - Steps in totally forgiving others