

Pray for your time together in God's Word!

Read the passage out loud as a group. Option: Give the group 5 minutes to look at the passage by themselves.

This Week's Passage

Scripture Reference

5 If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely. **6** The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. **7** Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. **8** I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. **9** Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. **10** Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, **11** in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Discussion

Leader's Note: Background Information—The specific person or situation Paul is referring to in v.5 is not as important as the fact that he/she grieved the community of believers and Paul pointed them towards reconciliation. If you are still curious—commentators tend to think that in v.5 Paul is not referring to the man from 1 Cor. 5:1 (the man living in sin with his step-mother), but a separate incident that caused Paul to write a “severe letter” of which has been lost in history, but Paul seems to refer to in 2 Cor. 7:8.

Ask the Group: What about this passage stood out to you?

Leaders' Note: This question gives your group the opportunity to explore their own ideas before leading them to specific discussion. Caution: Do not let this turn into a debate about personal understandings—keep it more on the “observation” level.

Read to the Group: In this passage, Paul is referencing an issue of sin in the church that led to communal discipline. He is now urging them to pursue restoration with the believer who was disciplined and sought reconciliation.

Ask the Group: How do sin and conflict affect our relationships (v.5)?

Possible Answers: They can lead to hurt feelings, bitterness, destroyed trust, confrontation, opportunities to speak the truth in love, opportunities to grow closer, etc.

- How can sin and conflict affect the body of Christ?

Possible Answers: They can lead to divisiveness, broken community, and rumors (on the negative side), or they can lead to guidance, church discipline, growth, and restoration (on the positive side). They are often felt by more than just one person.

Optional Transition: While conflict affects all of us, the next step is to seek forgiveness.

Ask the Group: When we have a relationship with Jesus, we approach sin differently. How does the gospel make it easier for us to confess our sins and seek forgiveness from one another?

Possible Answers: The gospel frees us to pursue reconciliation because admitting fault to one another doesn't mean we are failures—for God has declared us to be a success. Therefore we can freely and eagerly confess our sins and ask for forgiveness because our significance, stance before God, security, and worth are not at stake—only a prolonged status of our broken relationship with the person we wronged.

Ask the Group: What does it mean to forgive and restore someone?

Possible Answers: Essentially forgiveness is determining what you feel someone took from you, and then declaring in your heart, 'this person doesn't owe me anything' and continually declaring it whenever something triggers those negative feelings you had towards the person. It's making a '180' turn and not looking back. Restoration is working towards recreating a foundation of trust, truth, and love.

Ask the Group: Read vv. 7-8. What are some ways we can show grace to someone who has hurt us personally or the body of Christ?

Possible Answers: Forgiving, comfort (v.7), not bringing up their sin in public (using discretion), reaffirming love (v.8), etc.

Ask the Group: What happens if we don't offer forgiveness to those who have wronged us?

Possible Answers: We can allow bitterness, walls, and other sin to develop in our own hearts. We're no longer modeling Christ—as He has forgiven us for all wrongs. The gospel is not being lived out.

Ask the Group: Re-read vv. 10-11. Satan's goal is to outwit the community of believers. In what way does reconciliation battle against Satan's goal?

Possible Answer: Reconciliation heals broken relationships and creates unity—making the church more effective in spreading the gospel.

Application

Ask the Group (small or large): The gospel has freed us from all areas of sin, allowing us to be in reconciliation with each other. What is an area in your life where you need to seek that freedom of forgiveness through Christ?

Ask the Group (small or large): Are there any relationships in your life right now that need restoration?

- How can you seek reconciliation and restoration in both of these areas this week?

Suggestion: Send this application question and challenge out during the week to encourage your group.

Last Week's Application: (Discuss if time)

Ask the Group (small or large): What is YOUR response when someone communicates correction through love to you?

- **Ask the Group (small or large):** Based on what we talked about today, do you need to change your response to correction?
 - How will you do so this week?

Ask the Group (small or large): How can you communicate to the people around you this week that you are on their side and that you are working for their joy?