

WANDERING HEART: TEACH ME

March 17, 2024

Michael Swartzentruber, Senior Minister



Matthew 18:15-22

“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. 16But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

21Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” 22Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.”

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase or image stands out to you?
2. Jesus addresses conflict head on in this teaching, counseling **direct communication** between conflicted parties, exhorting people to **own the hurt** or pain that was caused, and **listen** to those who are hurting. Why might it be destructive to community and our lives to
 - bury our pain, or
 - vent our hurt without addressing it with the person who hurt us, or
 - communicate only indirectly through others (“would you tell so and so that he really hurt so and so’s feelings?”)?
3. How do you handle conflict or being hurt? What are some helpful things you’ve learned about working through conflict?
4. How do you handle someone telling you that you’ve hurt them, even if you didn’t mean to?

South Elkhorn Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

4343 Harrodsburg Road, Lexington KY 40513

859-223-1433 southelkhorncc.org

5. How did Jesus treat gentiles and tax collectors in his ministry? How does that treatment complicate the meaning of what Jesus says in verse 17?
6. Peter shows evidence of growth and maturity, asking follow up questions to the teaching of Jesus. Jesus then reveals that forgiveness and grace are inexhaustible dispositions essential to life-giving and healing community. How do you practice or seek to practice forgiveness (also called “repair work”)?
7. Forgiveness is complicated, and does not prevent accountability, eliminate the need for safety, nor always lead to reconciliation. Importantly, forgiveness is not about letting abusers keep on abusing, nor keeping those abused in unsafe and traumatizing environments. Reflect on the complexity of forgiveness, and consider what forgiveness means and can look like keep in mind the issues named above.