

Community of Christ

Fairbanks Branch Happenings

September 7, 2005

The theme for this Sunday is “Forgive From Your Heart”

How can we
Ever forgive
All the hurts received?
Read
The Word and Pray for the answer.

September 11th - 11:00 – Ordination of John R. Reimer to the office of Elder.

Can I Forgive You?

Bill McCartney stood before hundreds of thousands of men and proclaimed what he felt was straight from the heart of God: Forgive + Give = Live.

The “give” portion of this equation seems easy to understand, but what’s the big deal with forgiving?

Men often don’t realize this, but forgiveness can open the floodgates of freedom and life. Let me illustrate: I recently heard a man testify before his church of the bitter hatred he bore toward his mother who had abandoned him when he was 6 months old.

“For the last 36 years of my life, I despised her for giving me away,” he said. “Then I read a book on unforgiveness, “The Bait of Satan,” and realized by refusing to forgive her I was held captive. For the second time in my life I called her. I told her how wrong I’d been not to forgive her. She began to weep and confessed over the phone, “All the while I have hated myself for leaving you.”

“As I forgave her, she in turn was released to forgive herself.”

But the story doesn’t end there. As he stood weeping like a child before the congregation, he shared how he had always sensed a wall or barrier in his relationship with God. As he forgave his mother, the wall tumbled down. He now enjoyed freedom in his relationship with God and with those he loved.

This is not an unusual incident. I hear testimonies like this everywhere I go. People are choosing to release their captive and painful past -- and it’s making all the difference in their lives.

They are disarming one of Satan’s most deadly and deceptive weapons -- the trap of offense. It holds Christians hostage, severs close relationships and widens existing breaches. Those escaping captivity are greatly hindered from reaching their full potential. Here are a few facts you should know about offenses:

First, I have found the most painful and serious offenses occur between Christians. If you think about this, it makes sense: When you are offended by another brother in Christ, an offense can feel like betrayal. It reminds me of David’s lament in Psalm 55:12-14: “For it is not an enemy

who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng.”

Those closest to us can hurt us the deepest: the one who is delivering the sermon, our co-workers or possibly someone even closer -- the ones we grew up with, confide in or sleep with. In fact, the closer the relationship, the more potential for severe offense. You often find the greatest hatred among those who were once close.

Attorneys will testify that their most vicious cases are often found in the divorce courts. We hear in the news about murders at the hands of family members. The home, meant to be a shelter, is often the very root of our pain. We find this same sad scenario in our churches -- the house God intended for shelter and peace, the residence of His family.

Second, we don't take the sin of holding offense as seriously as we should. Without realizing it we often categorize sin. Unforgiveness is a “weakness” while drugs or adultery are “biggies.” But in God's eyes unforgiveness is the same as murder (see James 2:10; 1 John 3:15; Mark 11:25-26).

Third, it's possible for an offense to grow as we let it fester. The wrongdoing becomes blown way out of proportion in our minds, making it even more difficult to forgive. We can be so focused on what was done to us that we deny and refuse the possibility of any wrong done by us. We allow the enemy to distort our perception when we point our finger at others.

Fourth, we may feel as if we're the only ones who have been treated this way. Jesus warned that it is impossible to live in this world without being offended (see Luke 17:1). Yet some of us are shocked and confused when it happens to us. Unprepared we are vulnerable to a root of bitterness. Expect it: you will have an opportunity to be offended. It's how you respond -- either holding it or releasing it -- that determines your future.

Can you be justified in holding on to an offense -- the really serious ones? Society will answer yes, but God says no. You may argue, “But you just don't know what was done to me.” Maybe not, but do you know what you did to Jesus?

We need to realize how great our offense was before God. He forgave us. A person who cannot forgive is a person who has forgotten what he has been forgiven of -- or has never known his need for forgiveness.

In Matthew 18 Jesus uses a parable to compare our sins against God with our breaches with each other. A servant owed a king 10,000 talents. A talent was a unit of measure for gold, silver and other commodities. Let's say he was referring to gold. A common talent was approximately 75 pounds.

Jesus was emphasizing that this servant owed a debt he could never pay. The servant begged for mercy, and the king, moved with compassion, forgave him, wiping out the entire debt.

In the parable the king represents God the Father who has freely forgiven us, His servants, of an impossible debt.

Our debt was unpayable. We have no means of ever repaying God and clearing the debt of sin. Our offense was overwhelming. We deserved an eternity in hell. Yet God responded by giving

us Jesus, who paid the certificate of debt that was against us.

Later this man who was forgiven the debt went out and found a fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii. When he realized this fellow servant could not pay, the forgiven servant threw him in prison until he could repay the debt.

A denarius was equal to a laborer's daily wage. So this man owed his brother almost a third of his yearly salary. For example, if the yearly salary was \$24,000 he would owe him roughly \$8,000. That's big bucks! How would you like it if someone stole one-third of your yearly salary? That's not a little offense -- but now compare it with the debt for which he was forgiven, and the \$8,000 isn't even a drop in the bucket. Offenses committed against us don't compare with those for which we have been forgiven.

This parable represents exactly what we do when we refuse to forgive. We imprison the offenders, refusing to release them until they have fully repaid the sum we determine as compensation for their offense. For some the prison of unforgiveness is so strong that they never set their captives free.

How does God forgive? When Adam sinned, God the Father could have said to the Son: "They sinned against Us. Let them all go to hell, and let's start over with another universe and race of beings in Our image." He would have been justified in doing so.

But the good news is that, because of His love, God chose to forgive even though we did not deserve it. If you are having a hard time with forgiveness, think about the love and mercy of God that saved you from hell and eternal separation from Him. If He freely forgave us of so great a debt, how can we not forgive one another?

As I travel and share this message, at least half of the people respond to the call to forgive. One pastor said, "I have never seen so many set free in one night in all my years of ministry."

The choice is yours. Forgive from your heart and be free -- or remain captive in the trap the enemy has carefully laid for you. Your response determines your future.
Excerpted from "The Bait of Satan" by John Bevere (Charisma House) for "New Man" magazine. All rights reserved.

The above was written for a Christian men's magazine but forgiveness is not gender specific so please replace "men" with people as you read it.

Romans 14:1-12 (The Message) -Cultivating Good Relationships

1Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with--even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently.

2For instance, a person who has been around for a while might well be convinced that he can eat anything on the table, while another, with a different background, might assume all Christians should be vegetarians and eat accordingly. 3But since both are guests at Christ's table, wouldn't it be terribly rude if they fell to criticizing what the other ate or didn't eat? God, after all, invited them both to the table. 4Do you have any business crossing people off the guest list or interfering with God's welcome? If there are corrections to be made or manners to be learned, God can handle that without your help.

5Or, say, one person thinks that some days should be set aside as holy and another thinks that each day is pretty much like any other. There are good reasons either way. So, each person is free to follow the convictions of conscience.

6What's important in all this is that if you keep a holy day, keep it for God's sake; if you eat meat, eat it to the glory of God and thank God for prime rib; if you're a vegetarian, eat vegetables to the glory of God and thank God for broccoli. 7None of us are permitted to insist on our own way in these matters. 8It's God we are answerable to--all the way from life to death and everything in between--not each other. 9That's why Jesus lived and died and then lived again: so that he could be our Master across the entire range of life and death, and free us from the petty tyrannies of each other.

10So where does that leave you when you criticize a brother? And where does that leave you when you condescend to a sister? I'd say it leaves you looking pretty silly--or worse. Eventually, we're all going to end up kneeling side by side in the place of judgment, facing God. Your critical and condescending ways aren't going to improve your position there one bit. 11Read it for yourself in Scripture:

"As I live and breathe," God says,
"every knee will bow before me;
Every tongue will tell the honest truth
that I and only I am God."

12So tend to your knitting. You've got your hands full just taking care of your own life before God. Romans 14:1-12 (The Message)

September 10th-11th – Psalty Lock-in – 5:00 p.m. to 12:00 noon. Youth Lock-in to be held at North Houston. Games, dinner, campfire and breakfast. Please contact Sherry Caesar if your child or you will be attending. Please bring your sleeping bag, any blow up mattresses you might have, a snack to share and a game to share.

September 16th –**Seekers & Disciples Class- 10:00 a.m.** Joanne Chapman will be facilitating a Seekers class at Fairbanks. This class is several weeks long and focuses on the beliefs and fellowship of the Community of Christ. You will not want to miss this. Lots of discussion opportunities.

October 1st – 3:00 p.m. - The “senior” Whitehalls will be hosting a BBQ and hayride at their place. More details to be provided at a later date but be sure to mark the date!!!!

October 2nd – **Seekers Class** – Sue Turner will be the facilitator

November 12th – John Wight from the Office of the Seventies will present a workshop on a “Vibrant Witness” at Fairbanks. The Hispanic Congregation will be serving a meal at lunch time. Please plan on staying and sharing a meal with John and support the Hispanic Congregation

November 13th – John Wight will deliver the Message at Fairbanks during the 11:00 worship service.

Katrina Relief: The branch leadership agreed to contribute \$500 to the Oblation fund, on behalf of the Fairbanks Community of Christ Congregation, from our reserves. As a congregation, we

previously voted to support HOT. Individual contributions to HOT, Oblation, and other relief organizations are highly encouraged.

HOT has had an increase in clients due to the need from the Katrina situation. The items needed by HOT are: cash donations, shoes, socks, shampoo, soap, toilet paper, toothpaste, toothbrushes, hair, brushes, combs, soap, deodorant, school supplies

Other appropriate opportunities are being investigated. We will continue to keep you apprised of other opportunities by posting them on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall.

Please continue to pray for all of the affected by Katrina and for all of those assisting in the rescue, recovery and maintenance efforts.

Ongoing - We are going to make "quiet bags" for the children ages 4 to 10. These bags will be kept at the church and will only be used during church services. We would appreciate donations of items for the bags. It would be nice for the items to be of a religious nature, but they don't have to be. Possible suggestions are: coloring books, crayons, puppets, finger puppets, small flannel graphs, stencils, lacing cards, books, etc. Just use your imagination and think of quiet things that children 4 to 10 would enjoy. Items need to be nonviolent, quiet and not messy (no play dough). Places where you might find items are: Dollar Stores, Wal-Mart, Target, Hobby Lobby, Michael's, Half Price Book Store, teacher supply stores, and religious book stores such as Grapevine and Lifeway Christian Book Store. Please bring your items to church and give to Ruth Chatburn. If you have any questions please call Ruth at 281-345-1126.

See the calendar on bulletin board in the fellowship hall for upcoming events at Fairbanks and Mission Center events. September has been posted.

The worship and nursery schedules have been posted in the family center for July through September, 2005. Please check these.

Nursery Schedule:

September 11th – Andrea and David Watson

September 18th – **Need Volunteer**

September 25th – Beth & Steve Herold

We need volunteers for the nursery. Please see David Romig.

Please review the prayer list in the Sunday bulletin. If you have added someone to the list please update Leo Caesar with any new information and current status of the prayer concern. Please contact Leo Caesar if you wish to add/remove someone from the list. Please pray for all those affected by Katrina and all of those that are providing rescue and recovery for the victims. Also pray for those that are trying to maintain the peace and calm in a difficult situation.

Calendar & Mission Center News:

The Coastal Bend Mission Center is proud to announce that the Coastal Bend web site is up and running! You can visit the site at www.coastalbendmc.org

Sept 16- 18th – Sionito Work Party -Direct questions to Tim Everett- Tim.r.everett@exxonmobil.com

Sept 24- 25th – Coastal Bend Mission Center Conference & Retreat – Camp Sionito

Oct 14- 16th – Men's Retreat- Livingston – Jimmy Munson providing guest ministry

Oct 21 – 23rd – Sionito Work Party - Direct questions to Tim Everett-Tim.r.everett@exxonmobil.com

Oct 23rd – HAPPY 50TH BIRTHDAY – PASADENA CONGREGATION

Oct 28 -30th – World Religions Retreat with J.W. Winland – Pasadena Congregation

Nov 11 – 13th – Sionito Work Party -Direct questions to Tim Everett- Tim.r.everett@exxonmobil.com
Nov 12 – 13th – Vibrant Witness Workshop- Fairbanks Congregation- John Wight
Dec 9 – 11th Sionito Work Party- Direct questions to Tim Everett- Tim.r.everett@exxonmobil.com
Feb 10-12th 2006- Silent Retreat at Cenacle House

The following is a schedule of those that are currently scheduled to deliver the message for the 3rd quarter. This is not the “official list” and is for informational purposes only. Please refer to the worship schedule in the fellowship hall for changes.

September 11th – John Reimer
September 18th – David Romig
September 25th – Doug White

Encounter World Religions Retreat - Friday, **October 28** – Sunday, **October 30**- 7p Friday, 9-6 Saturday, 9 – noon Sunday- **Pasadena** Community of Christ (713) 473-0608 - 1118 Pasadena Blvd - Pasadena, TX 77506 - Contact: Mark Euritt - 512-567-1581, meuritt@austin.rr.com
Through varied, thought-provoking presentations and activities this retreat introduces you to the values, stories and traditions of the diverse religious-cultural groups that comprise the North American mosaic. You will experience world religions in a way that textbooks cannot convey and which will allow fear and misunderstanding to melt away.

JW Windland, Toronto, Canada JW is a comparative mythologist and founder of the ENCOUNTER WORLD RELIGIONS CENTRE. For the past thirty years, JW has been passionately involved in experiencing the world religions first hand. In addition to his academic background in religious studies, JW attends mosques, synagogues, gurdwaras, churches and temples on a regular basis as a testimony to his interest and love for the world religions. This background gives JW a perspective that is unique and tangible. He has established genuine friendships in these religious-cultural groups, has joined in their rituals and has introduced thousands of people to these diverse communities. He is an expert in interreligious dialogue and in creating comfort across religious and cultural barriers. He brings a familiarity and a deep knowledge of the diverse communities and traditions that make up the North American mosaic. (<http://www.worldreligions.ca/>)

As noted in the Coastal Bend Calendar President of Seventy John Wight will be in our Mission Center **November 12-13** to facilitate a Workshop. The Workshop is "**Vibrant Witness: Who Me?**" The **Fairbanks** Congregation in Houston has graciously agreed to host this event. Please plan on attending!

February 10-12, 2006 - Annual Silent Retreat at The Cenacle Retreat House
420 N. Kirkwood, Houston, TX 77079 Sponsored by Live Oak –Marlene Krueger - Retreat Spiritual Director. Those interested are invited to participate in this opportunity to experience the Spirit of God in new ways. This will be a silent retreat except for discussion of experiences during a Saturday evening activity. Some direction will be given on how to direct your thoughts, but the most important thing is that you allow the Holy Spirit to direct you. You may bring inspirational reading materials, Bibles, journals, or other materials that you feel will help you to be in a deeper relationship with God as you meditate during the day. There is a outdoor labyrinth for meditation. Spiritual Directors from the Cenacle will be on hand for individual spiritual counseling to those desiring and administration will also be available. A free yoga class and/or massage therapy (\$35/half hour) may be provided based on advanced interest. Silence is sometimes a difficult thing for us to do in this busy world of ours and it can be a little scary. The

reward can be a quiet reflective time between you and God. You can use the silence to listen for that still small voice or to rest in the Lord. The weekend will be what you make of it and can be a powerful tool for healing and restoring the spirit, if that is what you seek. Check-in will be at 7:15 PM on Friday, February 10th and the retreat will conclude with a Sunday morning service followed by lunch.

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The cost of \$130 per person includes a private bedroom with lavatory, community toilets and showers, and all meals, beginning Saturday breakfast. Towels and bedding are provided.

Number included in this registration: Female Male

Interests: Yoga Massage Therapy (\$35/half hour; paid separately to therapist)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State and zip: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email: _____

Please complete the lower portion of this form and send it by January 6, 2006 to:

Community of Christ, P.O. Box 16685, Sugar Land, TX 77496-6685.

Payment should be by check payable to Community of Christ. Please send payment with the registration form. If you have any questions, please contact Marlene by phone at 970-577-0657 or email: markru_99@yahoo.com

I will be sending out periodic e-mails letting everyone know what is “HAPPENING” at Fairbanks. Please let me know if your e-mail or other contact information changes.

Mark your calendars and **participate, enjoy, reach out!!!!!!**I pray that everyone have a safe and happy week.

Martha Romig