

## People Problems

1. Warm up question: On Sunday we talked about how to better manage people problems which is not easy, because people can be annoying. And since each of us is a “people,” that means each of us can be annoying. What’s something about you that can sometimes be annoying to others?
2. Wherever you go in life, you will encounter people behaving in colorful, ornery, why-did-you-do-that, crazy-making ways. It can be one of life’s greatest challenges – which, in turn, raises the question: Why did God choose to place us in a world where ‘people problems’ are so prevalent? To answer that question, Jeff suggested we have to ask an even deeper question: Why has God put us here?
  - a. We wish the answer was: God put us here to prosper and thrive – to live a life of perpetual fun-ness. Most people subconsciously assume that’s what life’s supposed to be about. What’s the danger of that perspective?
  - b. A better answer, Jeff suggested, is: God has put us here to grow our souls. What do you make of that answer? Does it resonate with you? Why or why not?
3. If the primary purpose of life is to have fun, people problems make no sense. But if the primary purpose is to grow our souls, people problems make sense. So, instead of viewing people problems as headaches, Jeff encouraged us to reframe them as opportunities to grow. Instead of saying, “You annoy me,” he encouraged us to say, “You sanctify me.” Who’s someone who “sanctifies” you – someone who’s a real challenge to you? Do you think it would help to see that person as an opportunity to grow yourself, rather than a source of endless angst?
4. Ephesians 5:1 says, “Be ye imitators of God, as dear children.” John 14:19 says, “Whoever has seen [Jesus] has seen God.” In other words, Jesus was the best possible human representation of what God is like. So we seek to become like Jesus – to learn to be Jesus to the people around us. For guidance as to what it looks like to be Jesus to people, let’s read Ephesians 4:25-5:2.
5. On Sunday, we drew four principles from this passage, starting in verse 25, “Putting away all falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors.” From this we drew **Principle 1: We must dare to speak the truth to the people around us.**
  - a. Some of us really struggle to be honest about how we feel; others of us are good at it. If you’re one who struggles, why do you find it so hard to share your honest feelings? If you’re one who excels, tell us why you don’t find it hard to share your truth with others.
  - b. Tell us about someone who has spoken the truth in love to you in a way that really helped you grow. How did that person’s honesty help you grow?

6. Verse 26 says, “Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.” From this we drew **Principle 2: Anger is helpful when we use it to motivate us to quickly resolve people problems, but it’s deadly when we let it fester.**
  - a. Many of us have always viewed anger as a bad emotion that needs to be suppressed. Why?
  - b. How do you feel about seeing anger as a helpful impulse from God meant to give you the impetus to act quickly to resolve problems?
  - c. One of the best things we can do to resolve our anger is to speak our truth directly to the person we’re angry with. Think about a time you’ve done this. Did it help resolve your anger?
  
7. Verse 32 says, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.” From this we drew **Principle 3: Being Jesus to people means forgiving them.**
  - a. Jeff shared a video of Davey Blackburn talking about the murder of his wife. Davey said, “Forgiveness isn’t an emotion. I wasn’t every going to feel like forgiving them. . . . What I realized is that forgiveness is a decision, and it’s not just a onetime decision; it’s a daily decision. So literally every day I have to wake up and I have to decide to forgive.” What do you think of what he says? How does it compare to your experience?
  - b. Davey went on to say, “Here’s why I decided to decide to forgive – because bitterness and unforgiveness is going to be a cancer to no one else except me, and it’s going to eat me up inside if I hang on to it.” What do you think of what he says? How does it compare to your experience?
  
8. Chapter 5, verse 2 says, “Live in love, as Christ loved us.” I Corinthians 13:4-8 says, “Love is patient, love is kind. . . . It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.” From this we drew **Principle 4: Loving people like Jesus means we hang in there with them, as best we can, despite the problems we experience.**
  - a. Jeff quoted someone in our congregation who said, “Sometimes in marriage, if one person is struggling or the strain of caring for kids or parents is too great, sometimes you have to just say, we just need to survive this. We can be great again, but we are going through something that we didn’t plan or ask for and when we make it through, we will be much better for it.” Does this resonate with you? Why or why not?
  - b. As we’ve talked about people problems tonight, who is someone you’ve been thinking about that you have problems with? Which of the four principles do you think you most need to apply to that situation?