

Transformation Group Training 11

I. Introduction

A. A big part of being a good friend is helping someone change.

B. How do we do that?

1. One way we are summarizing the process is through a great quote from Loving Messy People:

a) "Gospel care is the God-exalting, grace saturated art of loving another person, through patiently knowing, sacrificially serving, truthfully speaking, and consistently applying the gospel in order to help them become more like Jesus."

b) That would be worth memorizing. Each phrase helps us understand what it means to be a good friend.

2. And lately we have been focused on truthfully speaking or teaching.

C. In other words, making disciples, being a good friend, requires teaching.

1. What kind of teaching?

a) Sometimes formal instruction.

b) Often more informal instruction.

(1) For example, correcting.

(2) If we are going to be good friends, we need to learn to correct each other well.

2. Correcting well is so important!

a) Because this is where so much good can happen.

b) Because this is where so much damage can happen as well.

D. So, to be a good friend, we need to teach, and to teach we need to correct, and to correct, we need to think about, what does good correcting look like?

1. Because, we don't have many positive examples. In the culture around us, it seems like there are basically two options:

a) Don't say anything about anything.

b) Scream at people.

2. And because many people are anti-correction completely. They think any correction is judging, and they even have a Bible verse! After all, in Matthew 7:1 Jesus says do not judge.

II. I want us to look at Matthew 7:1ff and think about how Jesus wants us to relate to someone we think is wrong. In this passage Jesus identifies the wrong way to deal with someone who you think is wrong and the right approach:

A. The wrong way:

1. **Obviously, this verse does not mean that you are never allowed to think anyone is wrong or say that anyone is wrong.**

a) Otherwise it would be an impossible command to follow.

b) Even saying, don't judge is a judgment.

2. **But what does it mean? It means there is a wrong way to respond to the differences you see in others and that is by becoming a hard, critical, mean, proud person.**

a) We must avoid spiteful criticism.

b) We must be careful when evaluating people's motives.

c) We should be careful about jumping to a quick negative conclusion about someone without gathering information.

d) We shouldn't make sure we are not confronting someone as sinning just because they are not keeping our particular preferences.

e) We shouldn't be so much harder on everyone else than we are on ourselves.

3. **Why is not becoming hyper-critical so important?**

a) It's sin.

b) It harms you.

c) It distracts you from dealing with your own issues.

B. The right approach:

1. Start with yourself. Make sure you are not just a proud difficult person, because that is sin and it is going to cause problems for others and for you.

2. Go to help. Put that away, and put on self examination in its place. Get yourself ready to be helpful by dealing with your own sin, and then get ready to help them.
3. But think about who you are helping exactly. As you go to correct, make sure you discern whether the person you are trying to help is a believer or unbeliever, and if an unbeliever, and, whether they are the kind of person you can help at this point or not.

Loving Messy People Chapter 11 Discussion Questions

1. Come to Equipping Hour ready to share the one concept from Chapters 1-10 that has most impacted the way you make biblical friendships.
2. What does Mehl mean by the term “gospeling”? Why is gospeling essential in our biblical friendships as we disciple one another? (pp.147-149)
3. On pages 150-152, what is Mehl’s purpose for telling Arash and Leila’s story?
4. In the section “Our Misunderstanding of Suffering” (pp.152-154), what was corrective to you personally as you respond to the suffering of others?
5. On pages 154, Mehl says, “Unless the causative connection between a person’s suffering and thier sin is absolutely clear, don’t even try to make a connection.” Why do you agree or disagree? What is Mehl trying to prevent with this counsel?
6. On pages 155-157, Mehl reflects on how suffering effects us in three broad categories. (Only the first is specifically numbered.) What are they?
7. Stretch question: How could thinking through each of these three categories lead to wisdom in your gospeling?
8. On the bottom of page 157, Mehl wants to push us beyond thinking of people as “suffering” or “not suffering.” To do so, he lists on pages 158-159 some categories of ways in which people suffer. What should you do with the truth that “every person is suffering every day”?
9. On pages 160-161, Mehl briefly teaches us the “discipline of lament.” What are some characteristics of God-pleasing lament? Has your appreciation of lament increased after this chapter? (If you would like to spend more time learning about the biblical patterns of lament, a great resource is *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy* by Mark Vroegop.)
10. In summary, what connections are there between suffering and gospeling?