

SESSION TITLE: "Loving One Another (Hindrances) Part 2"
**FOCAL PASSAGE: (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 6:7; Gal. 5:15, 5:26;
James 4:11; John 5:44)**

Central Teaching/Learning Aim: To help the learner recognize and avoid things that would hinder significant relationships in his/her ABF.

I. Creating Interest in the Series (Hook)

A. Share – The following true account. Ask members to listen for things that would hinder these neighbors from getting along.

It all started in 1998 when Michael Zwick of Glenview, Illinois, complained about his neighbor's new fence. It left a dark area behind the garage where gang members might hang out, he felt. In response to his complaint, the neighbor, Jean Craft, according to *The Chicago Tribune*, told Zwick not to put his recycling bins on the public parkway in front of her house because they were killing the grass.

In retaliation, Zwick "blew leaves back onto her property, let his weeds grow 12 inches high, and aimed a fake security camera at her yard." Then she "moved his recycling bins, complained to police about snow plowed onto her land and bought new shades and drapery to cover her windows."

The village of Glenview finally wrote an ordinance that prohibited Zwick from putting his recycling bins close to his neighbor's house. Zwick defies the ordinance and has been given 10 citations and charged \$1,000 in fines. The case has now gone to Cook County court.

Says Zwick, "We're digging in."

Glenview Neighbors Recycle Feud from Fence to Weeds to Bins on Parkway,"
Chicago Tribune (6-04-01)

Ask – Members to read the scripture passages one at a time out loud. Ask members to listen for hindrances that could possibly damage relationships.

State – Today we are going to discuss how to avoid these hindrances that could damage or destroy relationship.

B. Optional Method – Movie Clip "Tommy Boy"

Start: 59:45

Stop: 1:02:03

Synopsis:

Tommy and Richard are on a business trip. Everything has gone wrong and it culminates in a car malfunction, which escalates into a bitter fight followed by an awkward situation at dinner where both are unwilling to be honest and they are unable to heal.

Ask – What caused this fight between these two friends? What are some common reasons friendships are damaged?

Ask – Members to read the scripture passages out loud one at a time. Ask members to listen for hindrances that can damage or destroy friendship.

II. Book

- A. Utilize the discussion guide to examine the scripture passages.
Note: You could place members into groups and have them discuss the questions.

III. Look

- A. **Place** members into groups and have them complete the case studies.
- B. **Optional Method – Distribute** the handout “Cultivating Life-Long Friends” and have members complete it.

IV. Took

- A. **Share - the** following information:
Recently the long running, extremely successful, sitcom “Friends” completed its ten-year run.

Ask – What made this show so successful? The actors genuinely loved one another off-screen. The actors hung out with one another off-camera. The show depicted 6 characters who were open and vulnerable.

The characters were depicted as hanging out together, loving one another, supporting one another, and caring for each other’s needs.

State – Although the show had no spiritual basis it did an extremely good job of depicting friendship in action.

Many of the characteristics should be portrayed and lived out in an ABF with the obvious addition of Christ-centered living. Close in prayer.

- B. **Optional Method – Share** the following writing:

Ken Filkins, a Christian writer from Farwell, Michigan, has created this "Parable of the Pit:"

A man fell into a pit and could not get himself out.

A subjectivist saw him and said, "I feel for you down there."

An objectivist happened along and said, "It's logical that someone would fall down there."

A realist happened along and said; "Now THAT's a pit!"

A scientist saw him and said; "I'll calculate the pressure necessary (pounds/square inches) to get you out of the pit.

A geologist said, "Wow! Can you tell me about the rock strata in your pit?"

A rock hound asked, "Are there any rare specimens in the pit?"

A Christian Scientist came along and said, "You only THINK that you're in a pit."

A Pharisee said, 'only bad people fall into a pit.'

A philosopher offered a lecture on "The Elementary Principles of a Pit."

A new reporter asked, "Can I have the exclusive story on your pit?"

A neurotic said, "You haven't seen anything until you've seen MY pit!"

A county inspector asked, "Did you have a permit to dig a pit?"

An IRS man asked, "Are you paying taxes on your pit?"

An optimist said, "Things could be worse."

A pessimist said, "Things WILL get worse."

Jesus, seeing the man, took him by the hand and lifted him out of the pit.

State – We are to be like Jesus as we relate to our Christian brothers and sisters. We should be ready to lift them out of the pit. Let’s work on our friendships and truly love one another this week.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

(Teacher's Copy)

1. What hindrances are mentioned in these passages that could potentially damage or destroy friendships?
 - a. (Rom 14:13) Judging and causing a brother to stumble
 - b. (1 Cor. 6:7) Suing one another
 - c. (Gal. 5:15) Criticism and damaging words
 - d. (Gal. 5:26) Boasting and envy
 - e. (James 4:11) Speaking against one another and judging each other
 - f. (John 5:44) Seek glory from one another instead of God
2. What are common examples where members may judge one another?
3. What are possible things that could cause others in an ABF to stumble?
4. What alternatives to lawsuits are mentioned in (1 Cor. 6:7)?
5. Would you be willing to suffer a loss to avoid a lawsuit with a brother or sister in Christ?
6. How would you reverse the damage caused by critical words?
7. How can you avoid envying fellow Christians?
8. How can you stay focused on glorifying God rather than other Christians?
9. What are appropriate steps to seeking forgiveness and reconciliation among believers?

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Case Study 1

You are taking a new couple who recently joined your ABF to dinner at a favorite restaurant. You order your customary alcoholic beverage with your meal thinking nothing about it. You sense that the couple is very uncomfortable with your choice of drink.

- What do you do next?
 - How could you ease the tension in this situation?
 - How could you avoid this in the future?
 - If you give up your personal liberties for others how will they react?
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Case Study 2

You hired an individual in your ABF to do some repairs in your home. You are not pleased with the work and have repeatedly asked the person to come back and make things right. He says he will but never does. You are considering a lawsuit to get action but decide for the sake of the relationship to hire someone else to correct the problem.

- What message does this send to the irresponsible friend?
 - How would you keep this incident from damaging your friendship?
 - Is it a good idea to hire a close friend?
 - Why does the Bible speak out so firmly against suing a brother or sister in Christ?
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Case Study 3

You have a select group of friends you spend more time with in your ABF. Your favorite past time is gossiping about other ABF members who are not in "your group". You invite a new friend to join your group. When the gossip starts flying the new person grows real uncomfortable and speaks out against the gossip session.

- How should the group members respond in order to protect the fellowship of the ABF?

- What steps can be taken to guard against damaging words in an ABF?
 - If friendships have been damaged due to gossip and criticism, how can they be restored?
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Case Study 4

One of your ABF leaders does a lot of great ministry in and through your ABF. In fact, they do more good deeds than anyone else in the class. The problem is that they want everyone to know about their accomplishments. They seek the glory of men regularly.

- How would you confront them in a loving way?
- What would you say to them?
- Do you think this would damage your relationship?
- How could other ABF members help in this situation?

Cultivating Life-Long Friends

Work through the following 5 steps and consider ways to take your friendship with others in your ABF to a new level.

Step 1 *Make establishing true friendship your top priority*

- ❖ Friendships take time. How can you devote more time to your friends? When? Where?
- ❖ How can you protect your significant friendships?

Step 2 *Cultivate transparency in your friendships*

- ❖ How can you build mutual vulnerability?
- ❖ How can you protect the confidences shared?
- ❖ What do you do if the trust is violated?

Step 3 *Dare to risk expressing your love*

- ❖ Let your friend(s) know how you feel about them.
- ❖ How can you express your love?
- ❖ How do you keep this from being awkward?

Step 4 *Learn your friend(s) love language*

- ❖ What makes your friend(s) tick?
- ❖ How can you address their love language?
- ❖ What actions can you take?

Step 5 *Give your friend(s) space*

- ❖ Do not smother your friend(s) and try and control them.
- ❖ How do you know when to back off and give space?
- ❖ Encourage them to be the person God created.

THEE Word For The Week

Loving One Another (Community) – Part 3
Acts 20:28-31; Heb. 13:17

Monday – *Read (Acts 20:28-31)*

- Who was a person in your life that has been a spiritual role model? What is it about that person that you admire?
- As you read through these four verses, can you spot the two imperatives or commands that Paul gives (verse 28 and 31)? Because this is a farewell address, what do these commands have to say about what Paul viewed as important (look at Acts 20:24)?
- Reflect upon what being a shepherd is like (daily tasks and responsibilities) and think through traits of someone who is a guard.
- To what degree are you to have these traits?

Tuesday – *Read (Psalm 23)*

- David describes the Lord as a shepherd. What life experience was David drawing upon as he wrote (1 Sam 16:10-12)?
- Which of these characteristics of the Lord do you most experience today? Take time to praise God for them.
- Which of these characteristics do you most need to experience from the Lord today? Spend some time in honest prayer for them to be experienced in your life.
- Read Philippians 4:6-7.

Wednesday – *Read (Hebrews 13:20-21)*

- The writer to the Hebrews prays to the Great Shepherd. What are the desired outcomes of the prayer?
- What new insight does this shed on what it looks like to be a shepherd?
- If the Lord our Shepherd is to be "successful" at equipping us for every good work and work in us what is pleasing to Him, what attitude and actions must we (as the sheep) possess?

Thursday – *Read (Hebrews 13:1, 17)*

- What relationship is there between loving each other as brothers while obeying your leaders and submitting to their authority?
- Read Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28; and 1 Tim 4:11-16. Reflect upon how these verses should motivate us as spiritual shepherds and in obedience to our spiritual shepherds?
- How is your attitude as a shepherd and toward the shepherds God has placed over you (whether at a small group level, ABF, or the church in general)?
- Take some time to prayerfully write a pledge of refocus as a shepherd and/or submission to the shepherds God has placed you under.
- Pray this pledge several times during the day and share it with a friend or spouse.

Friday – *Read (Acts 20:28-31)*

- What two dangers does Paul warn about here in verses 29-31?
- How important is it for a sheep to obey their shepherd in light of these two dangers?
- The first command Paul gives is for the leaders to be shepherds. Make a list of who makes up the flock God has entrusted to you.
- The second command he gives is for them to be on their guard (also Acts 20:28).
- Take some time to pray through these truths for members of the flock around you (children, friends, ABF members, elders, pastors, etc.). Drop them a postcard with a note of encouragement that you prayed for them.

REAL LIFE

“Loving One Another: (Hindrances) Part 2”

Romans 14:13; 1 Corinthians 6:7; Galatians 5:15, 26; James 4:11; John 5:44
(**Exegetical** . . . What it meant to the New Testament readers back **THEN**)

- I. The **CONTENT** of Paul’s two commands to the Romans regarding the exercise of Christian liberty (see 14:1-12) was that they 1) Not Judge one another in areas of Christian liberty, but rather 2) Judge/Determine [same Greek term as above] within themselves never to Cause another to sin against his/her conscience, (Romans 14:13). **JUDGING One Another Hindered Love.**
NOTE: Paul warned against legalism on the one hand and license on the other. Because all believers would give an accounting to God for their exercise of liberty in Christ (vs. 12), legalistic rules should not be enforced to restrict another’s liberty. But neither should a believer disregard the weaker brother or sister through flagrant expressions of Christian liberty that encouraged the weaker one to act against his/her conviction (vs. 5).
- II. Paul’s **CONCLUSION** [expressed into two rhetorical questions] regarding the Corinthians’ spiritual defeat as a result of Suing one another before unbelievers (see 6:1-6) was that they would do better [better than going into court against a brother and winning] to be Wronged and Defrauded, (1 Corinthians 6:7). **SUING One Another Hindered Love.**
NOTE: Paul was convinced that the Master-planned community (the church) could and should handle disagreements and disputes within the fellowship. He viewed their suing one another in secular courts as a shameful moral defeat. Something more important than money was at stake for the Corinthians . . . the reputation of the body of Christ. Trusting Christ’s church for justice and provision would help maintain the spiritual character of the community.
- III. The **CONTENT** of Paul’s warning to the Galatians regarding their fleshly and immature [see vss. 13, 16] verbal battles with one another was that they would Destroy/Consume one another if they continued to fight amongst themselves [over issues of sanctification by works – legalism], (Galatians 5:15). **BICKERING WITH One Another Hindered Love.**
NOTE: Paul feared that the Galatian church might tear itself apart, even as a wild lion might tear apart and consume an antelope. The factions that lined up for or against the teachers of legalism threatened the very life of the church. Rather than serving one another in love (vs. 13c), the Galatian believers were consuming one another in murderous bickering. They needed to get their doctrine straight and then get themselves unified.
- IV. The **CONTENT** of Paul’s command to the Galatians, in light of their identification with Christ’s crucifixion (5:24) and their dependence on the Holy Spirit (5:25), was that they Not Become boastful, challenging and envying one another, (Galatians 5:26). **BOASTING against One Another Hindered Love.**
NOTE: Paul’s concern for the Galatians went beyond their bickering behavior to include their prideful attitude. If only they would understand the significance of crucifying the flesh and walking in the Spirit, the health and welfare of the church would be preserved. The real battle was not against one another, but against the flesh within that threatened the church.
- V. The **CONTENT** of James’ command to his scattered church, since Speaking against a brother was the same as Speaking against the Law (the Word of God) – thus placing one’s self in judgment over the Law rather than in submission under the Law, was that they Not Speak Against (Curse, see 3:9) one another, (James 4:11). **CURSING One Another Hindered Love.**
NOTE: James’ audience faced many trials (see 1:2ff). The pressure of those trials had caused their tongues to be unleashed against one another (3:9-12). This “cursing” of one another did not accomplish God’s purpose for them in their trials (1:3-4, 20). The Law (Word of God) taught that humans were made in the image of God (3:9 w/ Genesis 1:26). Thus, to speak against or curse a brother was to disagree with the Law’s evaluation of a fellow human being. And to devalue a fellow human being was to devalue the Word of God.
- VI. The **CONTENT** of Jesus’ Observation [in a rhetorical question] concerning Belief that resulted in eternal life was that Unbelievers Welcomed Glory (Praise) from one another (fellow humans) rather than Seeking Glory (Praise) from the One and Only God, (John 5:44). **GLORIFYING One Another Hindered Love.**
NOTE: The problem Jesus addressed was a problem of values. Whereas the praise of man focused on earthly and passing values, the praise of God focused on spiritual and eternal values (see the context of the two distinct resurrections in 5:25-29). Jesus warned his audience (unbelievers and believers alike) that valuing the glory given by men, who valued earthly things, was vain, even deadly, compared to valuing the glory given by God, Who valued that which was eternal and life giving.

**(Theological . . . What it means for believers ALWAYS)
SELF-CENTERED IMMATURITY WITHIN
THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
HINDERS LOVE.**

- I. A Lack of Wisdom Hinders Love within the Church, (Romans 14:13).
- II. A Lack of Trust Hinders Love within the Church, (1 Corinthians 6:7).
- III. A Lack of Humility Hinders Love within the Church, (Galatians 5:15).
- IV. A Lack of Contentment Hinders Love within the Church, (Galatians 5:26).
- V. A Lack of Respect Hinders Love within the Church, (James 4:11).
- VI. A Lack of Perspective Hinders Love within the Church, (John 5:44).

(Pedagogical . . . What it means for us NOW)

**GROW UP AND
LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**

- I. Practice Wisdom in the Church, (Romans 14:13).
 - A. Don't Sin against another through Judgmental Legalism.
 - B. Don't Sin against another through Irresponsible License.
 - C. Practice the Wisdom of true Liberty in Christ.
- II. Practice Trust in the Church, (1 Corinthians 6:7).
 - A. Don't Steal from one another.
 - B. Don't Sue one another in court.
 - C. Practice Trust in God to provide.
- III. Practice Humility in the Church, (Galatians 5:15).
 - A. Don't Bicker about Superiority over one another.
 - B. Practice Humble Dependence on God's power to save.
- IV. Practice Contentment in the Church, (Galatians 5:26).
 - A. Don't Provoke and Envy one another.
 - B. Practice Contentment with the Hope God gives.
- V. Practice Respect in the Church, (James 4:11).
 - A. Don't Curse one another in contempt.
 - B. Don't Place yourself above God Word.
 - C. Practice Respect for God's image bearers and God's revelation.
- VI. Practice Perspective in the Church, (John 5:44).
 - A. Don't Seek Glory for earthly accomplishments.
 - B. Live for God's Praise.
 - C. Practice a Perspective that is eternal.