On Sunday, we learned that God our Father has established a new relationship with us based on forgiveness. At the cross, He took our sin and shame upon Himself, making a way for us to live in right relationship with Him and with one another.

As we learned before, in the ‘already-not yet’ reality of our world, our relationships can get messy. At one time or another, many of us have experienced real hurts or pain and we have hurt others.

Yet, as we receive the forgiveness of Christ, the incredible promise is that our relationships with one another can also be touched and restored, not just to what they were, but to something even better.

Let’s read the following passages.

**Matthew 5:23-26 (NIV)**

23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

25 “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

**Ephesians 4:32-5:2 (NIV)**

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

1 Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**2 Corinthians 5:17-19 (NIV)**

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in
Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Matthew 6:9-15 (NIV)
9 “This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.’

14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

1. In Matthew 5:23-26, Jesus gives two examples to illustrate the urgency of being reconciled (in right relationship) with one another before we come to worship God. Why do you think this attitude of heart is so important?

2. Look at Ephesians 4:32-5:2. According to 5:1, who are we? God invites us to follow His example. How are we to imitate Christ? Think of and share one way you could put this into practice this week.

3. Jesus lays the foundation for how we are to pray with the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-15). How does Jesus teach us to pray about forgiveness? How is God’s forgiveness of us connected to our forgiveness of others?
4. Based on 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, what is the new creation reality we now live in?

5. How did God reconcile us to himself through Christ? According to 2 Corinthians 5:19, what did Jesus not do? How is that completely different from our human response?

God didn’t send His son to save a perfect people. He didn’t come with standards or requirements. He forgave us when we came to Christ, and showed us kindness and compassion. By His work on the cross, our sins have been forgiven! But it does not end there.

As we live out this forgiven life with one another, God grows us and takes our relationships deeper, where there is genuine healing, restoration and transformation.

Are there relationships we are afraid to address because we want to avoid conflict or confrontation? Let’s be encouraged that we don’t have to hide from them or give up. God acknowledges the desire of our hearts when we are willing to take a risk to address our relationships that need God’s touch and healing.

Let’s take some time to pray and respond to the Word. Let’s pray for a fresh reality of God’s forgiveness in Christ to fill our hearts today. Are there relationships in your life that have been difficult or strained? Pray and ask the Lord to fill you with a new kindness and compassion.

Let’s also pray for our campus fellowships and communities. Let’s pray that our relationships would be made even more real and alive as we hope in Christ. Let’s pray that we would be instruments of God’s forgiveness to one another. Let’s commit in prayer to walking in the way of love for one another, that God may touch and change the lives of those around us.

**This Week:** Read through Psalm 103. In your journal, write down all the ways the psalmist describes God’s heart toward us. Note the psalmist’s response. Take some time to pray through the psalm and respond in praise to the Lord.