

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

COMMUNITY GROUPS ARE BETTER WHEN MEMBERS COME PREPARED. TAKE TIME BEFORE GROUP TO GO OVER THIS GUIDE.

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

One of the most important lessons we can takeaway from this series is simply that Taylor Swift is singing songs that show the limit of who we can be based solely on horizontal relationships, and this final week is no different. In her song, *Bad Blood*, Swift sings about irreconcilable differences between 2 people who used to love each other, and while all of us can relate to difficult relationships and bad break-ups, the gospel according to Jesus doesn't allow us the luxury of irreconcilable relationships. The apostle Paul makes that crystal clear in our passage, and shows that the antidote for bad blood is the love of a good God.

1. **Christ's love compels us:** When we truly encounter the love of Jesus, we find ourselves being compelled to die to sin and live for him. The love of Christ allows us to deal with real sin (the bad blood we all have) and then live for Jesus is a real way.
2. **Christ's love changes us:** Not only are we compelled by the love of Christ to deal with our bad blood, but his love changes us: it changes how we see him, how we see the cross and how we see others. Just like falling in love makes the world seem a little brighter and happier, so being loved by Jesus changes our worldview. Relationships are no longer JUST horizontal; there is a vertical – spiritual – component, as well.
3. **Christ's love calls us:** We all know that the gospel isn't just about us, but sometimes in the area of relationships, we live like it is. We forget that it's about more than just reconciling our relationship to God; it's also about reconciling the relationships of others to God. Christ's love calls us to speak for God to men about hope!

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- Do you have a takeaway from this week's message that you would like to share?
- What are the most frustrating and rewarding aspects of relationships?
- Take the time to read Genesis 3:1-7 and Romans 5:12 to see where our bad blood came from, and then read Romans 5:18-19 and discuss why reconciled relationships are impossible apart from Jesus.
- Read Romans 5:10. What does reconciliation to God lead us to? Whose blood was powerful enough to overcome our bad blood? (hint: see Romans 5:9)
- Obviously we can't make others reconcile with us if they don't want to, but Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5:20 that we're to call them to be reconciled to God. How does reconciling the vertical relationship help with the horizontal ones? What insight does Romans 12:18 give us about how to deal with people who won't reconcile?
- Read 1 John 2:9-11 and 3:14. Obviously, our relationships on earth are a barometer of our relationship with God. Now read 2 Cor. 5:20 and close out the group answering this question: how are you doing as a representative (an ambassador) of God's reconciling love?