



The Cruciform Way With Jon Hand

APPETIZER: The Cross Shaped Way

Cruciform (cross-shaped) Way = A posture of mercy, grace, and forgiveness in everything we do.

Peace is one of our core values at The Meeting House: We are committed to non-violence, peacemaking, and being agents of reconciliation.

The Gospel of peace is one of Jesus' greatest gifts to us and one of our greatest gifts to the world around us.

In all my years of pastoring, I have learned this lesson: a person's spiritual and emotional maturity is not truly visible until they DON'T get their way. Then you see the real person.

-Erik Reed

DINE IN: Steps to Forgiveness

The first century Christians in Rome were considered unpatriotic and offensive for practicing forgiveness, mercy, humility, and compassion for their enemies.

Romans 12:14-21

Step 1 - Vs. 14 -15 - See those who mistreat you as persons to bless rather than problems to solve.

Step 2 - Vs. 17 – See the potential for evil in yourself. It is easier to see the evil in others before we can see it in our own heart and attitudes.

Step 3 - Vs 16 – Own your need for mercy, humility, forgiveness, and grace.

Step 4 - Vs 21 – With Jesus' help we choose the cruciform way: absorb the evil by forgiving it and recycle the evil into mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and enemy love.

TAKE OUT: Creating Space to Forgive

Forgiveness is not forgetting. It doesn't mean agreeing with those who hurt us, or we disagree with. Forgiveness still holds people accountable for wrongs done against us. Forgiveness does mean we release people from our rage, our bitterness, our resentments, and our blame and seeks to possibly restore the relationship.

Forgiveness is something we do in partnership with God. We receive it first for ourselves and give it to others out of the forgiveness we've been given.

We don't need wait for someone to ask for our forgiveness before we can give it to others.

Cruciform people are people who live ready to forgive.

"The cross is not the private property of any human being, but it belongs to all human beings; it is valid for all human beings. God loves our enemies—this is what the cross tells us. God suffers for their sake, experiences misery and pain for their sake; the Father has given his dear Son for them. Everything depends on this: that whenever we meet an enemy, we immediately think: this is someone whom God loves; God has given everything for this person."

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

NEXT WEEK: Honest to God – Deepen your relationship with Jesus through prayer, meditation and lament.

Home Church Questions

HANGOUT [Warming Up to the Topic – in one Large Group]

1. What stood out to you from Sunday's message?
2. What do you find the most challenging when talking about the practice of forgiveness? The most encouraging?

HEAR [Listening to God through Scripture – in Discussion Groups]

3. Read **Romans 12:14-21**.
 - a. What verse or idea stands out to you? Why?
 - b. What does blessing instead of cursing look like in your life? What are some practical ideas for blessing someone who is your enemy and also bringing accountability where possible?
 - c. Paul instructs us in **verse 15** to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. What are some practices that help you develop this awareness of and empathy for others?
 - d. In **verse 16**, Paul talks about removing pride and not being afraid to associate with people of "low position"? What would this look like? How can following Jesus help us with our pride?
 - e. Discuss the instructions in **verse 18** in light of some examples of conflict and mistreatment in your life.
 - f. What are some ways our culture and the Church can be "overcome by evil"? How does the way of love, of goodness, overcome evil? Do you believe that love never fails? Discuss how that can be true when evil often appears to win.

HUDDLE [Making It Personal and Praying Together – in Huddles]

4. Return to question 3, e. Share some situations and ask for input from your huddle for ways that you can live at peace with others.
5. Is there anyone you need to ask forgiveness from, or offer forgiveness to? What is holding you back from doing that?