



Session 6 Homework: Transforming Facilitators

Our hearts are easily broken for young women and girls who are being exploited in the commercial sex industry. We can even identify on some level with sex buyers because whether it is ourselves or someone close to us, we likely know someone who struggles with looking at pornography or some form of sex addiction and can understand the difficulty and depth of that struggle. When it comes to loving and desiring transformation for facilitators, however, particularly the pimps and traffickers themselves, we find ourselves truly tested. It is less likely that you can directly relate to such behavior and certainly more difficult to care for those who are in the business of exploitation and the persecution of others.

Saul must have been a terrifying figure for early Christians. In the book of Acts, Luke writes that “Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3 ESV), and that “Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1-2 ESV).

Saul was, in every sense of the word, the enemy of the early Christian church. Even if early Christians in other cities did not know people directly who had been persecuted by Saul, they had certainly heard of him and feared him.

Ananias was a disciple in Damascus, and when God told him to go find Saul of Tarsus to give him back his sight, he was likely scared and maybe even angry. He told God that he had heard how much evil Saul had done to the Christians in Jerusalem and that Saul’s purpose in Damascus was to arrest more believers – why would God call him to heal this man? Yet Ananias went; he healed Saul, and he baptized him.

Jesus told us in Matthew 5:43-44, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...” (ESV).

For many people this may be one of the hardest commandments to live out. Not only is it difficult to be kind to those who hurt you, but Jesus tells us to love those same people and to pray for them. Ananias had reason to fear Saul as well as to hate him for all that he had done to the believers, yet Ananias had the faith to trust God that He was sending him to the right place and the right person.

In order to love others, we must first begin to examine the sin in our own lives and see how we ourselves fall short. When we see our own sin, the ways that we have let others down, and, most importantly, the ways we have sinned against God, only then are we able to begin to understand how much we have been loved and forgiven and can we begin to love others as Christ first loved us. It is also when we see that Christ was able to redeem our lives that we begin to know that He is powerful to love and redeem pimps and traffickers as well.

Martin Luther King, Jr. preached often about loving our enemies. His teachings always focused on loving and not hating those who discriminated and mistreated people of color. In one of his sermons, he discussed the reasons that Jesus called us to love our enemies. One reason, he said for this teaching is that where we hate those who hate us, hate only increases and somebody must break the cycle. Next, he said that hate does not hurt only the hated but the haters because it fills their hearts with hatred and prevents them from seeing straight anymore.

Finally, he said, the reason that Jesus says to love our enemies is that “love has within it a redemptive power. And there is a power there that eventually transforms individuals... if you love your enemies, you will discover that at the very root of love is the power of redemption... There’s something about love that builds up and is creative. There is something about hate that tears down and is destructive. So love your enemies.”¹ Christ showed us the ultimate in loving His enemies. “...while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8 ESV).

We know the end of Saul’s story. He went from being one of the greatest enemies of the church to one of the most prominent apostles. He became known as Paul, one of God’s chosen instruments to spread the Gospel throughout the world. His story, however, would have been very short had Ananias not responded to God’s call in faith to go and to heal him.

As you think about this session on Transforming the Facilitators, consider the following and share any responses with your group the next time you gather.

- Do you recognize your own sinfulness enough to have compassion on others?
- What stands in your way from believing that God’s heart is for the victimizer as well as for the victim?
- Do you have faith that God is powerful enough to transform a pimp or a trafficker?
- Pray for faith today that you will be able to see a potential Paul in the face of a victimizer.

¹ King, Jr. M. L. (1957, November 17). “Loving your enemies.” Sermon presented at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, AL. Retrieved from http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_loving_your_enemies/