



Discussion Guide

Into the Word:

Hospitals can be dangerous places. A man goes in for surgery on his foot and contracts a deadly staph infection while in the recovery room. Schools can be dangerous as well. Too many coughing kids in them, to say nothing of bullies. Your own homes, with open staircases, fireplaces, and slippery floors, can be dangerous. Churches, which have things in common with all of these, can be dangerous places, too.

If you think of the church as an army (“Onward, Christian Soldiers!”) with a mission to achieve, what should we do with people who feel that the church has become a threat to their health? Such people are not likely to make very good ‘soldiers.’

If you think of the church as a hospital, the principal mission of which is caring for hurting people, what kind of church do you think will result? If churches are constantly tending to the wounded, how can they be aggressive in building the kingdom of God?

The first reaction to wounded people in the church is many times, “Get over it.” When you think about chronically wounded people at church, what is your initial reaction?

Do you think there are more wounded people in churches and the world today—including those wounded by the church—than there used to be? Explain.

Read Colossians 3: 12-14

Do you remember the story of the frog and the princess? Once upon a time there was a frog. But he wasn't really a frog. He was a prince who looked and felt like a frog. A wicked witch had cast a spell on him. Only the kiss of a beautiful young princess could save him. But since when do cute girls kiss frogs? So there he sat—an un-kissed prince in frog form. One day a beautiful princess grabbed the frog and gave him a big smack. Crash—boom—zap! The frog became a handsome prince. The prince and princess lived happily ever after.

Wounded people can be like frogs—small, full of warts, and green. To put it another way, they're needy, unpleasant, and demanding. But God loves these people and He has commanded us to love them as He does. There is a saint or a potential saint hiding within each frog.

Nothing happens when frogs kiss frogs. It takes a princess—a person of royalty—to kiss the spell off a frog. In the church, what makes our acts of compassion and kindness to others life changing is that we have been reborn and we are to welcome and love these wounded people with the love of our Savior.

- a. According to Colossians 3:12, what are three characteristics of God's chosen people?
- b. How does each characteristic equip us to help wounded people that may enter the doors of Meadowdale?

Apply the Word

Someone has said, “Be kind, for every person you meet is fighting a battle.” Next to you, in front of you, behind you in church are people who look like they have everything together. But scratch the surface, and you may find someone facing a cancer recurrence, someone agonizing over a partner’s infidelity, someone fearing the loss of a job. You may also find someone whose problems have been ignored or minimized by the church, someone who has experienced more judgment than grace, someone who feels so alienated that he no longer dares to ask for help.

Tim Crabbe (“The Church’s Walking Wounded”, Christianity Today, March 2003) identified 5 different types of wounds that people bring with them to church:

- *Abused People*: People have been exposed to many types of abuse. Improper sexual advances, misuse of funds, or abuse of authority. Some people can shrug this off and “get over it.” Others cannot. A single incident, or more likely a pattern, may lead them to mistrust all institutions and authorities.
- *Neglected People*: We live in a bureaucratic, impersonal world, and people are desperate to be noticed and cared for. Churches are one place people look to, sometimes unrealistically, for personal, psychological care. Many of them desperately need to be understood and helped, but the church often doesn’t feel comfortable addressing their problems. For some, this neglect is as wounding as the original offense.
- *Lonely People*: Modern society is full of people looking for love. Some come from broken or dysfunctional families, and they hope the church will offer warmth they never found at home. Churches often seem to promise exactly what they hope for. Sometimes the church’s Sunday morning big event emphasis misses people. They need the sense that somebody listens to them, and attends to their soul.
- *Guilty People*: Though we live in a “guiltless society,” stripped of all the old moralisms, many people today are still weighed down by guilt, some of it deserved, some of it not. Some churches really are good at dealing out even more guilt.
- *Overinvolved People*: Churches attract idealists. Almost inevitably, some idealists become overinvolved, overidentifying themselves with their ministries. Burnout can become a psychic and spiritual wound that lasts long after the original fatigue. This can be magnified by plugging people into programs without caring for the soul

What would help you be more sensitive to people around you who may be more wounded than you realize?

It is easy to see wounded people as a liability to a church. Dealing with them distracts us from our real mission of outreach and discipleship. But what are the advantages to helping the wounded heal?

Many of you could probably come up with some examples of ways in which people have been wounded in church. But can you share some examples of ways in which the church has provided a healing environment for the walking wounded?

Prayer Time-

End with a time of prayer asking God to give you the Spirit to be sensitive to those that come to Meadowdale with wounds. Ask specifically that we as a church are sensitive to any thing that would prevent the healing power of God from reaching these people.