

Small Group Study Guide



April 3, 2016

The Empathy Lens

OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, relationships are not simple and at times not easy. It's hard to accept that good people can reach different conclusions. Keep teaching us how, in your spirit, to live at peace with all people by serving as your ambassadors, your diplomats in a troubling, troubled world. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Romans 12:18

If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

INTRODUCTION

Bad blood can infect any relationship. And the quality of our lives is only as good as the quality of our relationships. Lack of peace about a relationship robs you of peace in your own life. But you can have peace about a relationship even without peace in the relationship. Happiness comes from peace with God, peace with yourself, and peace with others. Empathy is first aid for bad blood. In difficult relationships, empathy can be the key to beginning a conversation that leads to health and peace. When you empathize with someone, you see things you wouldn't have seen. Your anger turns to compassion. Your hurt begins to heal. You live out the kind of radical love to which Jesus called us.



QUESTIONS

- 1) Talk about a relationship that makes your life better. What are some things about that relationship that you value and appreciate?
- 2) During the message, Pastor Eric defined empathy as “feeling what the other person feels.” What are some obstacles we face to being empathetic toward others? Why do we resist that level of connection?
- 3) Politics is a subject that can cause bad blood in a relationship. Do you tend to enjoy discussing issues, or avoid them? How readily do you listen to and learn from opposing positions?
- 4) Is it difficult for you to believe that when it comes to bad blood your life will be better if you follow Jesus by taking the long walk of empathy? Why or why not?

FINAL APPLICATION

Think about a difficult relationship in your life. What can you do this week to view the problem from the other person’s perspective and take a step toward him or her? How can this group support you?