



Session 7: Grow into an Emotionally Mature Adult

Introduction

Be open to yourself, to God, and to the people in your group. It is ok if you feel a little bit uncomfortable. Just know you are invited to be as vulnerable as you would like to be.

As a group let's remind ourselves of these guidelines:

1. Speak only for yourself, use "I" statements
2. Keep your sharing to 2-3 minutes, give room for others to share
3. No fixing, saving, or setting other people straight
4. Trust and learn from silence, there is no pressure to share
5. Observe confidentiality

The goal of the Christian life is to love well. Jesus was aware that true spirituality included not only loving God, but also the skill of loving others maturely. Growing into an emotionally mature Christian person includes experiencing each individual, ourselves included, as sacred, or as Martin Buber put it, as a "Thou" rather than an "It." Becoming emotionally mature requires learning, practicing, and integrating such skills as speaking respectfully, listening with empathy, and negotiating conflict fairly. As we will see in today's Bible study on the parable of the Good Samaritan, both self-respect and compassion for others are part of a life rooted in "I-Thou" relating.

For starters

As a group, jot down a list of qualities of emotional immaturity and emotional maturity.

| Emotional Immaturity | Emotional Maturity |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| | |

1. How do these qualities affect how we treat other people and how we view ourselves?
2. Why do you think we can be committed and “growing” in Christ and yet not be growing in our ability to be present and loving toward others?

Scripture: Luke 10:25-37

Who can hear a story on the news about someone getting mugged, robbed, stripped naked, and left for dead in an alleyway without being affected? These real-life stories also happened in the days of Jesus. And Jesus told a parable recorded in Luke 10:25-37 that imagines one such disturbing story—with an unusual twist.

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” 26 He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” 27 And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” 28 And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” 30 Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” 37 He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

1. According to Martin Buber, the great Jewish theologian, we treat people as an “It” when we use them as means to an end or as objects. We treat people as a “Thou” when we recognize each person as a separate human being made in God’s image and treat them with dignity and respect. If you were the priest or Levite, what are some of the reasons you may have passed by this man and treated him as an “It” instead of a “Thou”?
2. Look back at verses 31-33. What did the Samaritan see and feel that the priest and Levite did not?
3. On your own, jot down your thoughts on the following questions on the next page. Be prepared to share 1-2 thoughts with the group.

- Can you think of a time when you were seen in a negative light, treated as inferior, or passed over as invisible? How did it feel?

 - Who have you been taught not to see (i.e. treat as an “It”)?
4. Have someone in the group reread verses 33-36 out loud. The Samaritan’s compassion led him to stop and help the hurting man. At the same time, how did he demonstrate self-respect and awareness of his limits?
5. What are some of your challenges when it comes to loving your neighbor and loving yourself?

One way of growing in the area of loving others well, and treating ourselves and others as a “Thou,” is to understand how we manage our expectations in relationships. Expectations are assumptions about what someone should do. Every time we make an assumption about someone without checking it out, it is likely we are treating them as an “It” and not a “Thou.” Why? We are jumping to conclusions without having checked out the assumption. The problem with most expectations is that they are:

- **Unconscious:** We may have expectations we’re not even aware of until we are disappointed by someone.
 - **Unrealistic:** We may develop unrealistic expectations by watching TV, movies, or other people that give false impressions.
 - **Unspoken:** We may have never told our spouse, friend, or employee what we expect, yet we are angry when our “expectations” are not met.
 - **Un-agreed upon:** We may have had our own thoughts about what was expected, but those thoughts were never agreed upon by the other person.
6. Jot down a recent unmet expectation that made you angry or disappointed.
7. Ask yourself:
- a. Was I conscious (aware) I had this expectation?
 - b. Is my expectation realistic regarding the other person?
 - c. Have I clearly spoken the expectation to them or do I just think “they should know”?
 - d. Has the other person agreed to the expectation?
8. What have you discovered about your expectations and what do you need to work on?