

Sunday Assembly Reflection

WRITTEN BY: Robin Russell

REFLECTION: Diann Garnett, Gabriella Owen and Laurie Muns talked on Sunday about their short-term mission trip to Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where they offered a ministry of presence to Christians who have done the hard work of forgiveness and reconciliation. Rwanda was torn by genocide in the 1990s, when Christian neighbors turned against one another because of tribal ties. More than 800,000 died in 100 days, and many more were killed in revenge slayings. Since 1998, however, advocates for reconciliation have helped turn the country around by discipling the church and helping believers grow up as they learn to forgive one another.

This is Rwanda's message for us, said Jim. The church had failed on a massive scale because they did not understand their fundamental loyalty to Jesus and the body. Being born again was not enough; it took massive discipleship in becoming forgivers that turned things around and made the joy witnessed by the Lake Highlands women possible. Quoting Celestin Musekura's book on forgiveness, Jim said we have the choice to forgive and be one again, or to not forgive and give up the joy, freedom and peace we have in Jesus.

I was astonished at the unconditional forgiveness extended by Rwandans, even toward those who killed their family members. They express no hint of bitterness or hardness. They understood they were free to make peace with those who hurt them, because that is who they are as followers of Jesus. I often prefer to keep my distance from those who have hurt me, and "forgive" only through gritted teeth. The Rwandans challenge my self-focus and immaturity, and their example calls me to also grow up so I can love freely and fully.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: *Please pick one of the questions below to answer in your small groups; more if you have time. Be sure to pray for each other at the end.*

- Is there anyone in your life whom you have not forgiven? What's holding you back from choosing to forgive and become a peacemaker instead?
- What other loyalties of yours – i.e., political views, theological "beliefs" -- get in the way of oneness with other believers? Will you ask Jesus to reset your priorities?

Pray for one another to be able to forgive, whether the offender asks for it or not, so that we better reflect Jesus by loving others freely and fully.

Sunday Assembly Reflection is written by Lake Highlands Church members for Lifegroups and individuals to receive more from the spoken Sunday Assembly message through reflection and quick discussion. It is published on the first three Monday's of the month. If you are interested in knowing more about a Lifegroup or have a question about the reflection, please contact Donjalea Crane, donjalea@lakehighlandschurch.org or contact one of our Lifegroup leaders by going to lakehighlandschurch.org/Lifegroup-listings.

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