

## Sermon notes “The Relationally-Healthy Church”

The following comes from the *Leadership Training Guide*, published by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

Peter Scazzero, in his book *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, argues that Evangelicals have, to their detriment, ignored emotional and relational health as part of spiritual maturity. He cites this as the main reason many doctrinally sound churches remain relationally ill. Scazzero identified six principles of emotional and spiritual health for individuals and churches:

1. Looking beneath the surface: People invite God to bring to their awareness and to transform those beneath-the-surface layers that hinder them from becoming more like Jesus Christ.
2. Breaking the power of the past: People understand how their past affects their present ability to love Christ and others.
3. Living in brokenness and vulnerability: People live and lead out of an understanding that leadership in the Kingdom of God is from the bottom up, a noticeably different way of life from that commonly modeled in the world.
4. Receiving the gift of limits: People joyfully receive the number of “talents” God has distributed and are not frenzied and covetous, trying to live a life God never intended. They are marked by contentment and joy.
5. Embracing grieving and loss: People understand that rather than seeking a quick end to pain, embracing grief is the only pathway to becoming a compassionate person like Jesus.
6. Making incarnation your model for loving well: People follow the model of Jesus’ life in order to love others: entering another’s world, holding on to yourself, and hanging between two worlds.

### Prayer

Instead of genuine forgiveness, our generation has been taught the vague notion of “tolerance”. This is, at best, a low-grade parody of forgiveness. At worst, it’s a way of sweeping the real issues in human life under the carpet... Jesus’ message [of forgiveness of sins] offers the genuine article and insists that we should accept no man-made substitutes. (N.T. Wright, *The Lord and His Prayer*)

**God wants us to be merciful with ourselves. And besides, our sorrows are not our own. He takes them on Himself, into His heart. (George Bernanos, *The Diary of a Country Priest*)**

Our first task is not to forgive, but to learn to be the forgiven. Too often to be ready to forgive is a way of exerting control over another. We fear accepting forgiveness from another because such a gift makes us powerless, and we fear the loss of control involved... Only by learning to accept God’s forgiveness as we see it in the life and death of Jesus can we acquire the power that comes from learning to give up control. (Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*)

**He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach heaven; for everyone has need to be forgiven. (George Herbert)**

Lord, Forgiveness is rooted not in my worthiness, but in your mercy; not in my integrity, but in your character; not in my improving my spiritual lot, but in Jesus giving of himself on the cross for me. Let me want and seek and yearn for your forgiveness and let me receive it fully as a gift. I pray in the name of my Savior, Jesus. Amen.