

Part of love is moving towards others so we can love them well. How can we be encouraging each other in this as we move out of lockdown? What does it look like to help one another grow in this kind of way?

Let's look again at Paul's prayer for the Philippian church: And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:9-11)

1. Moving Towards One Another

God Has Come Down. He pursues us.

We can know lots about someone, even intimate details, but not really know them. We don't have a sense of what it's like to be them, we don't understand their hopes, fears, dreams, beliefs etc. We see the most clear example of moving towards and getting to know people in Jesus' incarnation.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8, ESV)

The context of these words is how we relate to one another. Jesus with his coming to earth and sacrifice is the model of that. Jesus moved towards us and he experienced something of what life was like for us.

1. He lived amongst people, wept with people, loved people, he got to know those around him.
2. As he moved towards people Jesus also spoke to them. He encouraged, challenged, rebuked, offered hope, spoke truth, challenged falsehood and asked questions.
3. He provides a pattern for the breadth and way we are to speak to one another in love.

Q Which people can you think of that Jesus moved towards? To what extent do you think that should be reflected by us?

Q In what ways can Jesus moving towards us serve as a model for us moving towards one another?

Q In what ways do you tend to speak to people? Where are your strengths and weaknesses?

2. Moving Towards Others in Order To Pray

We Look Up The second half of our focus for this session is that we move towards one another **in order to pray**. When we seek to pray with someone three things happen:

1. We explicitly include God in our thoughts and the process of change.
2. We recognise the necessary work of the Holy Spirit in change.
3. We walk alongside the person we are travelling with (rather than putting ourselves over them).

The first of these is critical because it helps us recognise that change is neither simply social or psychological. It points us to the wider purpose of our lives and discipleship that we've seen in Philippians.

The second brings humility, comfort and hope to the process. We are humbled when we realise that, whilst God uses us in his work, changing peoples hearts and lives is in his hands. In turn that should give us hope and comfort. Hope because God does work. Comfort because nothing is beyond his ability to change.

The third recognises that we are 'fellow travellers' rather than having a significant hierarchy between us. We recognise that we are always more alike one another than unlike, even with those who are the most broken, most suffering or most sinful.

Q What might moving towards someone in order to pray with them look like in everyday life?

To Reflect Upon: 'Who are you moving towards in order to pray with them?'

At different levels and with differing amount of time it could be a range of people, from those you have a few minutes with a week on a Sunday, to your small group, prayer partners or one-to-one. They'll all look different, but there are ways we can be moving towards them.

Adapted from Growing Together Material, Christ Church Walkley