

November 1, 2022

Dear CRE student,

We missed you at CRE on October 31st! So that you keep up with the other people in your group, we ask that you complete the following:

1. We began the session by playing a couple rounds of Jenga and then observed the following: What if we thought of Jenga as a metaphor for life? It's an imperfect metaphor, but it still offers a good analogy. When a block is removed from the Jenga structure, the structure gets weaker. Even with the removal of the first block, the structure gets weaker. Over time, when blocks continue to get removed, the structure will eventually collapse.

In this analogy, the Jenga tower is the human person. But we are not a single tower. We are made up of several things, including a mind, emotions, a body, and even relationships.

A human person has a mind. But there are thoughts that can negatively affect the brain or mind. When this happens, the person is weaker.

A human person has a heart. But there are emotional experiences that can negatively affect the heart. When this happens, the person is weaker.

The human person has a body. But there are physical experiences that can negatively affect the body. When this happens, the person is weaker.

Even though this is outside of our physical being, the human person has relationships. But there are things that can be done to negatively affect relationships. When this happens, the human person is weaker.

What are some things that can negatively affect the following (answer for each area):

- Mind
- Emotions (heart)
- Body
- Relationships

2. As we look at everything that we identified, we could probably move each of the things that have negatively affected us into three different categories:

Category 1 - Things that other people do to us.

Category 2 - Choices that we make that have a negative effect.

Category 3 - Things that are no one's fault, but affect us all the same.

All three cases require attention. Without the needed attention and care, we can be like the Jenga game. Things about us can continue to weaken. They don't need to be huge problems.

Small things can continue build up and eventually break. This can best be seen in a relationship. Consider this scenario:

There are two friends who enjoyed each other's company. However, friend A makes confusing and passive-aggressive comments that can be quietly hurtful to friend B. "Am I taking that wrong? Did they intend that to be mean?" Friend B begins to notice other things. Friend B always makes the first contact about plans. Friend A only texts or calls when something is needed. Friend A might invite Friend B to an event, but then ignores Friend A while they are there together. Inconsistent. If Friend B extends an invitation to do something, Friend A says they are busy, but then makes plans with another group. Friend B will eventually wonder if there is a friendship at all,

If one of these things happens only once, then the friendship can absorb it. However, if these small things are consistent, then they will weaken the structure of the friendship to the point of collapse.

That is an example of how friendship get weakened. But the mind, the body, and the emotions can each be weakened. The Christian language for these acts of weakening is "sin".

"Venial Sins" are acts that weaken our life. Usually they weaken relationships, our body, our mind, or our emotions. There is a danger that we weaken to the point of collapse.

"Mortal Sins" are acts that are so serious that they cause a relationship, our mind, or emotions, or our body to collapse. When we do something destructive such as this with complete freedom and with the intention of doing something destructive, that act is a mortal sin.

Sometimes we are victims of sin. Other times we are the ones who do something destructive either to ourselves in mind, body, or emotions or do something destructive to someone else. Then there are things that happen to us that are no one's fault. Life can bring circumstances to us that can wear us down. School, moves to new places, jobs we may have, or events we have in our families all can negatively impact us, but there are no one's fault.

Human experience tells us that we get hurt and that we hurt others or ourselves. Yet, for the Believer, God is a healer. Christians believe in this phrase:

"There is no shattering that love cannot heal"

3. God the Healer

For this section, read the Scripture passage and answer the corresponding questions:

Philippians 4:13

I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me.

Our bodies are amazing. They have an incredible capacity to heal. Yet, they are also fragile and vulnerable. Many of things that are called "bad habits" are bad, not because someone said they

are bad. They get called “bad” because of the potential damage that can be done to our bodies. Bad habits can be hard to break. But the verse from Philippians says that there is strength to overcome any bad habits we have developed.

- Are there habits that you want to break from?
- Are there things in your life that you believe you need to stop before they develop into a bad habit that could have a lasting affect?

Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

The human brain is the center of everything, especially our self-identity. Stress, anxiety, worry, other people’s opinions of us can all weigh on us. There are things people say that plant thoughts in our brains that we can have a hard time shaking. We can also foster negative thoughts about others that can lead to negative words or actions. And then there are things that our brains do that we just can’t help.

The Scripture that was just read shows us that there's unconditional love, support, and rest. Life gives a lot for us to face, but God can offer rest when our thoughts over burden us or tempt us.

- Are there things that others have said that have planted negativity that is hard to shake?
- Do you ever harbor negative thoughts about others?

Psalms 147:2 & 3

The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem, and gathers the dispersed of Israel, Healing the brokenhearted, and binding up their wounds.

The heart is described as the seat of emotions. That’s why emotional hurt is described as a broken heart. It is easy to think of being brokenhearted as only something that happens because of a break up. While this can certainly cause a broken heart, there are many things that can cause a broken heart. Big disappointments in life, being embarrassed in front of peers, being let down by friends or family can all cause real heart break.

Heart break affects everyone. Believers and non-believers, the rich and the poor, young and old: everyone has heartache.

- When heartache comes your way, what have you done that helps you address it?
- Have you ever done something that you regret because it caused emotional pain to someone else?

Matthew 18:15

“If your brother sins [against you], go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother.

There are some sins that affect us and us alone. However, most sins affect others. Sins are further complicated when they weaken the relationship between people. For example, we do things or have things done to us that cause a strain in our relationships with our friends, parents, siblings, cast mates, or team mates.

- Do you have a relationship that you wish was better right now? What caused the strain?
- Have you ever experienced a strained relationship get better? What happened? What made it better?

The things we have talked about tonight are all common to the human experience. They touch everyone. We both get hurt by others and we can hurt others, as well. We can also do things that are hurtful to ourselves. When we are hurt or when we have hurt others, we know that it doesn't have to be like that. We want this different. We want things to get better.

Humans want things to be better, but there is also something deep inside the human person that tells them that love makes things better. That's why began this section with the phrase: “There is no shattering that love cannot heal”.

Christian believers hold on to the biblical belief that God is love. That means there is no shattering that love cannot heal.

4. Closing prayer

Let us pray:

God, others have done things that are wrong to us. We have also done things that are wrong to others. Yet, you have made a promise to us to heal, to restore, and to reconcile our relationships, our hearts, our minds, and our bodies. We come to you in prayer to ask for healing. Through our prayer and trust, we ask that you hear our request through Christ the Lord.

All: Amen.

A Reading from 1 John 8:7-11

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another.

Prayer Leader:

There is a deep knowledge inside us that tells us that love has the power to heal. We have talked about a lot of sensitive things during this session. We have talked about ways the we have made choices that have hurt our bodies. We have talked about ways that we have hurt others emotions and ways that we have hurt our relationships. We have also experienced hurt and are in need of being restored. God is love. God can heal. We are going to hear a song. As



St. John XXIII
Catholic Parish
Be Christ Inspired – Joyfully Live Our Call

this song is being played, let's ask God to let us know his love for us as we pray to him about ways that we have been hurt or ways that we hurt others.

Do a search for the song *Way Maker* by Leeland and listen to it as part of the prayer.

Offer thanks for something from this past week and ask for God's help for something in the coming week.

Joining all of our prayers into one, let's pray the perfect prayer taught by Jesus. Our Father ...

Prayer Leader:

God, after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, you said that you were the Lord their healer. May we come to know you as the one who heals us. We pray this through the Christ the Lord. Amen

Please complete and submit by our next class. You may email it to rotramelm@stjohn23rd.org or turn it in to your catechist/small group leader.

Peace and Blessings,

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