

Stuck

Week of January 10

It is no fun to get stuck. Getting stuck interrupts work, planned activities, and important appointments. Anyone who's ever been stranded on the side of the road with a flat tire or broken-down vehicle knows the frustration of being stuck. And yet, something happens when we get stuck, we are forced to stop and give attention to the problem at hand. With the right attitude, getting stuck doesn't have to end in anger or frustration. It can be a positive juncture if we give God permission to work.

1. Being stuck for a little while—for whatever reason—can be a good thing. When have you seen this to be true in your life?

Romans 8:28 says: "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them." Sometimes God allows His children to be "interrupted" by life's challenges in order to get our attention. Our closest relationships are often the first to feel the sting of being stuck. Whether it's your marriage, your finances, your kids, an estranged friendship, or a difficult job situation—Christ is an expert at getting people unstuck. But He is waiting for you to shift to first gear.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

2. Review the Plain Truth. Notice when a relationship gets stuck, the initial responsibility falls back on *you*. It's true it takes two to tango. But often we are so bent on projecting blame we excuse ourselves of any wrong. When have you been blind to your own faults and how was the Lord patient?

Re-read vv4-7 of 1 Corinthians 13, and replace the word "love" with your name. Read it aloud where you can audibly hear your name inserted in these powerful verses describing what love is. In what areas has the Lord helped you make stride in loving like Him? In what areas are you still struggling?

The more we understand the love of Christ, the more we see that we are incapable of loving like Christ. And yet that is what the Lord tells us to do. On the night before He took the cross, Jesus told His disciples, "This is my command: Love each other" (John 15:17). Love keeps no record of wrongs because Jesus personally carried our sins away when He died on the cross. He bore the judgment we deserved. Our debt was paid on Calvary. How can we possibly harbor bitterness and bear judgment toward another person? The only way we can love unconditionally like Christ is to remain in His love (see John 15:9).

If you have been wronged by someone in your family or perhaps someone you see on a regular basis, don't sweep the hurt under-the-rug. That is unhealthy and that is not what Christ is calling you to do. First pray, and then go to that person face-to-face and acknowledge the hurt. In sincerity confess any fault you have added to the scenario. Whatever their attitude, or whether or not they ask for forgiveness—release the hurt and trust Christ to begin to heal you. He will!

3. Why is there healing in confession? (see James 5:16)

Agape (unconditional love) distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. What do the following Scripture say about the power of Christ-like love? How do these verses speak to you personally?

Mark 12:29-31 – How are we to love our neighbor?

John 13:34-35 – What does our love for one another prove to the watching world?

Galatians 5:6, 14 – How is faith expressed? Notice "the whole law" based on love.

Colossians 3:12-14 – How does love bind us together?

1 John 2:9-11 – What is dangerous about harboring hate toward another person?

Just this week I happened to be in the same room where Stretch-N-Grow was taking place for the four-year-old class in the daycare here at Christ Church. After a few minutes of wild and crazy activity (a much-needed indoor energy outlet on a chilly morning), the instructor calls out: "One, two, three, four – Gluteus maximus on the floor!" In other words, sit and be quiet. All the children sat down, however, a couple of them continued talking. The instructor quickly reminded all of them: "If you keep talking you can't hear me. I have more directions to give you. Listen, so you will know what we are going to do next!"

Are you stuck? Is there some situation that has brought you to a screeching halt and yet you keep babbling, complaining, venting your woes without any results? The Lord is not indifferent to your being stuck. But He may want you to "Be still, and know that I am God!" (Psalm 46:10). If you keep talking you will not hear His voice. He has more directions to give you. Since you *are* stuck, listen to His instruction so you will know what to do next. Use this time of "being stuck" to spend time in His presence. Pray, read His Word, and ask Him: "Lord, where do I go from here?" Be attentive and open to His voice.

4. Take some time and ask yourself: Who do I need to be confessional to – who have I either hurt or harbored bitterness towards? Do I believe Christ can heal this relationship and get me “unstuck” or does part of me want to remain stuck? Let’s get serious about getting well, and live what we say we believe.

Additional Scriptures regarding forgiveness:

Matthew 7:1-7 Matthew 18:21-35 1 Peter 1:22-25, 4:7-8

STUCK

Text: I Corinthians 13:1-11, Matthew 7:1-5

The Plain Truth:

When your relationships are stuck in _____
you are responsible for first gear.

- 1) Confess your _____ and do not keep a record of _____.
- 2) Do not try to _____ your partner’s _____.
- 3) _____ your partner even if not asked to do so.
- 4) Become _____ through prayer, worship, and serving.
- 5) Let’s not just talk about _____...let’s _____ it.

One Year Bible Reading

Jan. 10: Genesis 23:1-24:51, Matthew 8:1-17, Psalm 9:13-20, Proverbs 3:1-6
Jan. 11: Genesis 24:52-26:16, Matthew 8:18-34, Psalm 10:1-15, Proverbs 3:7-8
Jan. 12: Genesis 26:17-27:46, Matthew 9:1-17, Psalm 10:16-18, Prov. 3:9-10
Jan. 13: Genesis 28:1-29:35, Matthew 9:18-38, Psalm 11:1-7, Proverbs 3:11-12
Jan. 14: Genesis 30:1-31:16, Matthew 10:1-23, Psalm 12:1-8, Proverbs 3:13-15
Jan. 15: Genesis 31:17-32:12, Matthew 10:24-11:6, Psalm 13:1-6, Prov. 3:16-18
Jan. 16: Genesis 32:13-34:31, Matthew 11:7-30, Psalm 14:1-7, Proverbs 3:19-20

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