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## **Community of Forgiveness**

### **Matthew 6.9-15**

#### **Series: The DNA of TVC**

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**The Village Church**

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## I. **The TVC Story**

- A. Arguably, one of the most important advancements in the history of the world occurred in 1953
  - 1. 1953, you see, was the year I was born
  - 2. Ok, so, that has nothing to do with the advancements I'm talking about
    - a. But it does help put in context the time frame for this extraordinary historical development
    - b. That within my lifetime astonishing developments in science and technology have exploded onto the world scene
    - c. Changing the way we understand human nature
    - d. Transforming approaches to health and medicine
- B. 1953 was the year that the double-helix structure of deoxyribonucleic acid was discovered
  - 1. That is – DNA
    - a. The very building blocks of life
  - 2. The discovery that set in motion the very field of molecular biology
  - 3. The discovery that generating a whole plethora of biotechnology pursuits
    - a. From genetic engineering to modern forensics
    - b. From gene sequencing to genetic fingerprinting
    - c. From monoclonal antibodies to the mapping of the human genome
  - 4. All have issued from that seminal discovery by James Watson and Francis Crick in 1953
- C. Or was it Francis Crick and James Watson?
  - 1. Who got top billing in the discovery?
  - 2. Turns out the order of the authorship of their initial paper, published in the British scientific journal *Nature*, was determined by a coin toss
  - 3. A paper which was essentially ignored at first
    - a. Ignored first by Francis Crick's wife, Odile
    - b. He had come home one day and told her "that we seemed to have made a big discovery"
    - c. To which, he later recounted, "she told me that she hadn't believed a word of it"
    - d. She said, "You were always coming home and saying things like that, so naturally I thought nothing of it"
  - 4. But that didn't stop Odile Crick from participating in the discovery

- a. For she was the one who first illustrated the double helix with a drawing of it in the article in Nature
    - b. Likely, not realizing its astonishing scientific significance
  - 5. But not only was it ignored at first by Crick's wife, it was ignored by the scientific community for some time
    - a. For it was not until the late 50's – when I was in first or second grade – that the paper began to capture the imagination of the scientific community
- D. And, as it turns out, the discovery was not without its controversy
  - 1. Watson and Crick actually conducted none of the experiments that went into the discovery
    - a. They relied on the work of a number of other organic and physical chemists who actually generated the scientific findings on which their understanding of the structure of DNA was based
  - 2. Not the least of which was Rosalind Franklin, whose high-resolution X-ray images of DNA fibers was what suggested the corkscrew-like shape
    - a. And provided the “ah-ha!” moment for Watson and Crick
  - 3. Rosalind Franklin – whose work was given little to no acknowledgment by Watson and Crick
    - a. And which was shared with the authors without her knowledge by others
- E. But in spite of the controversy, the discovery of the double helix structure of the DNA molecule has revolutionized the biological sciences
  - 1. And has become synonymous as the determining factor in the structure and function, indeed the very identity, of practically every life form on the planet
  - 2. Or, as Francis Collins, the former Director of the National Institutes of Health put it, “*Language of God*”
- F. But the discovery of DNA has had impacts well beyond the biological sciences
  - 1. It has become a metaphor for all that determines the identity and character of all kinds of human and social phenomena
    - a. Even of the identity and character of organizations is known by its DNA
- G. Organizations like churches
  - 1. Churches have a DNA
    - a. A set of determining factors that set them apart
    - b. Factors that give identity and direction
    - c. Factors that capture the imagination of their members
    - d. And provide the glue that binds its community together
- H. But like the discovery of the double helix, discovering the DNA of TVC has its own story
  - 1. Of course the story of the TVC dates back several decades – 50 years, in fact
    - a. We celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary back in 2020
  - 2. TVC started as an integral part of the Shell Point Retirement Community

- a. Which, in its early days, began as **Shell Point Village**
    - b. A community designed for retired ministers and missionaries
    - c. Primarily those associated with the **Christian & Missionary Alliance** denomination
  - 3. As such, the community began with a distinct flavor of evangelical Christianity
    - a. And the church that was established in those early days reflected the DNA of that initial community
- I. But as time goes on, things change
  - 1. And the identity of Shell Point Village began to change as well
  - 2. In the late 1990's Shell Point purchased about 700 acres of land for the purpose of expansion
    - a. Land that would eventually comprise the golf course
    - b. Oh, not just the golf course
    - c. But the Woodlands, Eagles Preserve, The Estuary, The Enclave, The Springs, and the Larsen Health Center
  - 3. And Shell Point would welcome people from all kinds of other segments of society into this Christian community
    - a. People from other Christian denominations
    - b. People, in fact, from other religious persuasions
    - c. And some from no religious persuasions
  - 4. Anyone who would like to participate with us in a distinctively Christian community
    - a. And Shell Point Village was thus renamed the **Shell Point Retirement Community**
- J. And the church – TVC – would change accordingly
  - 1. While our fundamental theological commitments would not change, we would find a congregation of more than 25 different denominational backgrounds engaged in our community
- K. When I came here 11 years ago, I wanted to discover the DNA of TVC
  - 1. I wanted to know what made this congregation tick
    - a. I wanted to understand the heartbeat of this community
    - b. I wanted get a sense of the identity of TVC
- L. And so the first thing I did for an entire year was nothing
  - 1. Now, I don't mean that literally
    - a. I did plenty of stuff
    - b. I did all the normal pastor stuff
    - c. I preached and taught each week
    - d. And I did many other things that pastors do
  - 2. But what I didn't do was presume I knew what TVC was all about
    - a. I didn't pretend that I understood the identity of this community
  - 3. I went into discovery mode
    - a. I listened to people
    - b. I heard their stories
    - c. I observed the rhythm of life in the church

- d. I watched how the church engaged with the larger Shell Point community
- M. And then, after a year of watching and listening, we embarked on a strategic planning process
  - 1. Which involved the leadership of TVC
    - a. And which included having a consultant conduct interview with all kinds of people
    - b. Church leaders
    - c. Church members
    - d. Regular attenders
    - e. Christians who didn't attend TVC
    - f. Even folks in our community who wouldn't think of attending any church
  - 2. And we collected all kinds of data
    - a. Demographic data on those who attend
    - b. Demographic data on Shell Point
    - c. Demographic data on the surrounding community
- N. And after all those data were compiled we began to explore what we understood to be the DNA of TVC
  - 1. Like the actual biological DNA, we wanted to know what was the structure of our church's DNA
  - 2. And that process generated what we came to know as our **Mission**
- O. And just like the actual biological DNA is comprised of a particular set of chemical bases, our DNA of TVC is comprised of a set of **Core Values**
  - 1. And our leadership went about the task of discovering those core values by identifying a whole host of things to which we were wholly committed
  - 2. And I think there were nearly 50 fundamental biblical and doctrinal commitments that we were able to identify
- P. But 50 is a huge number!
  - 1. There must be a way, we thought, to categorize those commitments and come up with a more manageable number
  - 2. A list that would be simple enough to remember
    - a. And yet comprehensive enough to capture our identity
- Q. So the more we wrestled with those commitments, it turns out that they began to cluster around seven biblical themes
  - 1. And those themes became our core values
- R. So the **DNA of TVC** is comprised of
  - 1. **The Mission**
    - a. And the **Core Values**
  - 2. And for the next several weeks we will explore who we are at TVC
    - a. The DNA of TVC
  - 3. It's perhaps the best way to start a new year

## II. **The DNA of TVC**

### A. **The Mission**

1. **We are building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ**
2. There are three core elements to the mission: forgiveness, purpose and hope
  - a. Each one emerged from our season of discovery
  - b. And while nothing about forgiveness, purpose and hope are necessarily unique to TVC
  - c. There is something about TVC that makes forgiveness, purpose and hope compelling, and identifies us as who we are
3. The focus of today's message is on forgiveness – so more about that later
  - a. Only the observation that the three core elements concern our past, our present, and our future
4. **Forgiveness concerns our past** – how do we deal with offenses?
  - a. Our sins, our trespasses?
  - b. Or the sins and trespasses of others against us?
5. **Purpose concerns our present**
  - a. What gets us up in the morning?
  - b. What does God have for us at this time of our lives?
6. **Hope concerns our future**
  - a. We are predominantly a senior community
  - b. We're coming down the home stretch of life
  - c. What do we have to look forward to?
  - d. How do we approach eternity?
  - e. With fear? With anxiety? With consternation?
  - f. Or with expectation and anticipation of life in the presence of God?
  - g. We are closer to eternity than we've ever been – are we ready?
  - h. That's what hope is about
7. That's the core of our mission – forgiveness (dealing with the past), purpose (meaning for the present), and hope (anticipation of the future)
8. But that's not all
  - a. **Building a community**
  - b. We cannot realize forgiveness, purpose and hope in isolation
  - c. We can only experience forgiveness, purpose and hope as a body, as a united, organic, congregation
  - d. As a community
9. And that can only be done **in Jesus Christ**
  - a. Only in Christ can we experience forgiveness
  - b. Only in Christ do we have purpose
  - c. Only in Christ can have hope for eternity to come
10. So that's our mission – the structure of our DNA, the double helix of our genetic identity
  - a. Building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ
11. Now is that's our mission – the structure of our DNA, what are the elements

- a. The biblical commitments on which the DNA is based?
- B. **The Core Values**
1. There are seven core values of TVC
    - a. And each one is identified with a descriptive statement
    - b. Along with scriptural foundations
  2. We value the **Glory of God: Demonstrated by our passionate devotion to exalting His sovereignty and majesty**
    - a. **Isaiah 42:8** (ESV) — 8 I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.
    - b. **Romans 11:36** (ESV) — 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.
  3. We value the **Word of God: Demonstrated by our reverential submission to its authority**
    - a. **2 Timothy 3:16–17** (ESV) — 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
  4. We value the **Sufficiency of Christ: Demonstrated by our resting confidence in His all-inclusive work**
    - a. **Ephesians 1:20–23** (ESV) — 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.
  5. We value the **Ministry of the Holy Spirit: Demonstrated by our acknowledgment that His anointed empowerment is essential for holy living and fruitful service**
    - a. **Acts 1:8** (ESV) — 8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
  6. We value the **Great Commission of Christ: Demonstrated by our active participation in working toward its completion**
    - a. **Matthew 28:18–20** (ESV) — 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
  7. We value the **Body of Christ: Demonstrated by our whole-hearted commitment to the church, the people of God**
    - a. **Romans 12:4–5** (ESV) — 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so

we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

- b. **Ephesians 4:15–16** (ESV) — 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.
8. We value **Prayer: Demonstrated by our unreserved dependence on the practice of prayer**
- a. **1 Thessalonians 5:16–18** (ESV) — 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
9. That's our DNA – the DNA of TVC
- a. Building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ
  - b. Core Values
    - (1) The Glory of God
    - (2) The Word of God
    - (3) The Sufficiency of Christ
    - (4) The Ministry of the Holy Spirit
    - (5) The Great Commission of Christ
    - (6) The Body of Christ
    - (7) Prayer

### III. **Community of Forgiveness**

- A. Now we focus on the first of the core of the mission statement
  1. Forgiveness, purpose and hope
    - a. This morning let's examine the significance of forgiveness
- B. First, why this emphasis on forgiveness?
  1. Well, as I began to get to know this community
    - a. And listened to the stories
    - b. A couple of things occurred to me
  2. First – you could be a church-going person for an entire life, and still not understand the gospel of Jesus Christ
    - a. That only in Christ alone we are saved and given eternal life
  3. There are many people who have adopted – even by cultural osmosis – the idea that by being reasonably good people, that we are automatically entitled to heaven
    - a. It helps if we attend church – but even that's not the essential issue
  4. Some have called this perspective **moralistic therapeutic deism**
    - a. Deism – the vague belief in a supreme being, that there is up there somewhere, God
    - b. Therapeutic – the idea that God's chief concern is for our own sense of well-being, happiness
    - c. Moralistic – that there is a sense of moral right and wrong

5. So as long as we believe those things – we’re fine!
  - a. Moralistic therapeutic deism is the majority report among Americans
  - b. Americans of just about any age and generation
  - c. Even the majority of American Christians
6. That as long as you are at least above-average, haven’t murdered anybody – at least lately – all you have to do to get into heaven is die
7. The media feed into this idea constantly
  - a. Anytime anybody of note dies, it’s assumed that they’re going to heaven
8. Most ignore what the Bible teaches about the sinfulness of humanity
  - a. How sin is both universal and pervasive
  - b. How all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
  - c. How sin infects every dimension of the human personality – behavior, thinking, emotions, relationships
  - d. How the wages of sin is death
9. And so, if we don’t understand those issues of human nature, we can’t understand the person and work of Christ
  - a. Who lived without sin
  - b. Who died on the cross, taking upon Himself the just punishment for our sins
  - c. Who was raised from the dead, vindicating who He said He was – the incarnate Son of God
  - d. Who ascended into heaven, sitting at the right hand of God
  - e. Who accomplished the work of redemption for all who would every believe in Him
10. And without understanding those things, we don’t understand how faith alone in Christ alone is our only hope for eternal life
11. In other words, all the things the book of Romans has been teaching us – the gospel of Jesus
12. And many people populate our churches without understanding the gospel of Christ
  - a. And how the only way to be forgiven is by confessing that we are sinners
  - b. And that only trusting in Christ alone may we be forgiven
13. That’s the first thing that I learned from my time of discovery
  - a. That people in this Christian community need to hear the gospel and be forgiven
  - b. That people in this church need to hear the gospel and be forgiven
14. Now the second thing that I learned about forgiveness came from listening to stories
  - a. Everybody at Shell Point has stories
  - b. That’s one of the wonderful things about working in this community – the richness of our stories
15. But embedded in those stories are often broken relationships



- a. Relationships within families
- b. Relationships with long-time friends
- c. Even relationships with spouses
- 16. And there is often a great need for reconciliation in relationships
  - a. And there can be no reconciliation without forgiveness
- 17. And the final thing I noticed in my period of discovery was that we don't have much time to get this figured out
  - a. We're coming down the home stretch of life
  - b. And there's an urgency about experiencing forgiveness
  - c. If we don't take care of this forgiveness issue now – when?
- C. **A Forgiven Community**
  - 1. That's why our mission statement – the structure of our DNA – calls us to be a forgiven community
    - a. A community in which we have humbly cast ourselves on the mercy of Jesus Christ
    - b. And cried with the tax collector, "Have mercy on me, a sinner!"
  - 2. Forgiveness has that vertical dimension – forgiveness from the loving heavenly Father who loved us so much that He sent His only Son that whoever believes in Him might have eternal life
- D. **A Forgiving Community**
  - 1. But then, there is this horizontal dimension of forgiveness
    - a. That we might be reconciled, not only to God, but to one another as well
  - 2. So the DNA of TVC calls us to be a forgiving community
    - a. That there would be no barrier to our relationship with one another
    - b. That we would seek to be reconciled to anyone with whom we have an offense
    - c. That we would hang on to no grudges; cling to no animosity
- E. That's what it means to be a community of forgiveness
  - 1. **Colossians 3:12–13** (ESV) —
    - a. 12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,
    - b. 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
  - 2. A forgiven community
    - a. And a forgiving community

#### IV. **The Forgiveness Imperative**

- A. I've preached nearly this whole message and haven't given you the scripture on which it is based
  - 1. Now I've used plenty of scripture
    - a. But the one that highlights the issue of forgiveness for me is a text that you know very well
  - 2. You have it memorized, or nearly so

- a. Nearly all of you
  - 3. Even if you went to church all your lives and never understood the gospel, you know this passage
    - a. It's the Lord's Prayer
    - b. So-called Lord's Prayer – actually the Lord's instruction on prayer
- B. **Matthew 6:9–15** (ESV) —
  - 1. 9 ... “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
  - 2. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
  - 3. 11 Give us this day our daily bread,
  - 4. 12 and forgive us our debts,
  - 5. as we also have forgiven our debtors.
  - 6. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
  - 7. [For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever, Amen.]
- C. First thing about forgiveness that we see is both dimensions – the vertical and the horizontal
  - 1. Forgiveness by God
    - a. And forgiveness of one another
  - 2. **“... forgive us our debts**
    - a. **...as we also have forgiven our debtors”**
  - 3. “Oh God, we are sinners; forgive us our debts, our transgressions, our sins”
    - a. “For we have forgiven those who have sinned against us – our debtors”
  - 4. Do you see it?
    - a. A forgiven community
    - b. And a forgiving community
- D. And then it says this – and this is the part you may not have memorized
  - 1. 14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,
  - 2. 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”
- E. This is what makes forgiveness, not just a suggestion, but an imperative
  - 1. Forgiveness by God is related to our forgiveness of others
    - a. Jesus says, “If you don't forgive your neighbor of their transgressions, their sins, against you...
    - b. “... neither will God forgive your sins against God.”
- F. But you say to God, “Oh no, God – but you don't understand how much they have hurt me!”
  - 1. Oh yes He does!
    - a. Jesus Christ died – without mercy, at the hands of men
    - b. He died for sin – for your sin
    - c. He just didn't die – He took upon Himself the just punishment for your sin
    - d. He experienced the wrath of Almighty God in your place
- G. Let me put it this way

1. You cannot be offended, be hurt by others in a way that even approaches the way you have offended God
  2. You and I – we are sinners
    - a. Sinners by nature
    - b. Sinners by conduct
    - c. Sinners by thought and attitude
    - d. Sinners by commission and omission of duty
    - e. Sinners by disobedience of the commands of God
    - f. Sinners by neglect of God
    - g. Sinners who deserve hell
  3. And yet, we don't experience hell
  4. And we have offended God
    - a. Who is altogether holy and righteous
    - b. Who deserves nothing but our praise and adoration and blessing
    - c. And instead, we give Him that back of our hand
- H. That's why, if you are unwilling to forgive your brother or sister, your neighbor or friend
1. You have no clue regarding your offense against the Holy One of Israel
- I. The DNA of TVC is to be a community of forgiveness
1. That's who we are to be
    - a. That's is to be our identity
- J. Is that who you are?
1. Are you forgiven by God through faith in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation?
    - a. Have you cast yourself on the mercy of Christ?
    - b. Take a moment – right now; silently before God
  2. Are you forgiving?
    - a. Is there anything that you have against anyone that you carry with you?
    - b. Any offense that you have been unwilling to let go?
    - c. Is there anyone that you need to go to, that you need to speak to, that you have offended, for which you need to ask their forgiveness?
    - d. Is there any obstacle between you and another that you need to resolve
    - e. Take another moment – right now; silently before God