



Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

The Future of the Church: Connected in Relationship

12/6/2020

There is a Zulu phrase, “*Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu*”, which means “A person is a person through other persons”. This runs counterintuitive to our Western culture of independence and autonomy but not to God’s plan for us. In his perfect plan, he created us to be in relationship with him and with others. So much more can happen within relationships for us as individuals as well as for the world than can be accomplished as individuals each in their own private silos. This week, Pastor Linda talked about the Collective Church’s value of being connected in relationship and why it is important to us as a church and for the Church.

Education in Jewish culture at the time of Christ started early for both boys and girls at around the age of 4-5 years old. Education would transition to practical life skills for the girls in the home and for the boys learning the family trade. However, the best students would continue their study in Beth Midrash (secondary school) as they learned the family trade. Then there were outstanding students who wanted to continue to study beyond that and hoped to become life-long learners and teachers. The process to do that was not unlike today’s application to university. The student would choose a famous Rabbi and then appeal with, “Let me follow you.” Only the best, the most promising were accepted. These were more than just students, they were “*talmidim*” and would listen, observe, and soak up everything the Rabbi said and did to imitate and become just like him.

When Jesus approached humble unlearned fishermen and invited them to follow him, he reversed the process and offered them an opportunity of a lifetime. Who wouldn’t want to bypass the college selection process and jump at the opportunity? They entered into a close personal relationship with the Rabbi, but also with the other *talmidim*. They hung on every word spoken by the Rabbi and then hashed out what they learned with each other. This was a great way to explore their understanding but could also be very contentious. Even though they didn’t always agree, as they grappled with each other they sharpened and clarified their understanding of the Rabbi’s truth.

Jesus has not only called us to follow him as well, but to move from being a follower to being a *talmid* - to be passionately devoted to him and enter into a very intense and personal relationship with him. This includes hashing out what we are learning and sharing our journey into genuine spiritual maturity and discipleship with other *talmidim*. He has invited us to be connected in relationship and it is the opportunity of a lifetime.

So Consider...

1. Are you connected in a small community within your church family?
2. Are you regularly seeking out other *talmid* to hash out your learning?
3. What obstacles are in your life that are preventing that from happening?

Take Action: If you have not taken the step of connecting in a community group or found other *talmid* to hash out your learning, reach out to one of the pastors this week so they can help you to begin sharing your journey by becoming more connected in relationship.