

Wednesday:

At Jacob's Well, we know that weekend services aren't enough to fully meet people's spiritual needs throughout the week. We believe that spending time with God each day *and* being part of a group, are two important steps toward knowing and becoming like Jesus. We need God and we need each other. Last week we talked about the **5 Commitments**, the way we at Jacob's Well intentionally live for Christ and grow in our faith in ways that touch every area of our lives. **Belong** is one of our 5 Commitments. It is embracing that each person's spiritual journey is impacted by their experience of community. Authentic and lasting life change occurs as we participate in each other's lives and help each other take next steps. Are you in a group at Jacob's Well? Why or why not? **Read Hebrews 10:24-25a**. Joining a group is a big commitment and building trust can take time. But as trust builds and life unfolds within a group, something vital happens to our spiritual growth: we discover the place where we can safely learn and grow. Instead of adding pressure to our spiritual lives, a group is meant to be a relief, a sharing of life's burdens, a place where relationship and trust come first, so when loving challenge and constructive conflict may arise, they can be talked about with love and empathy. Committing to a group will bring each of us into a deeper relationship with God. As you move into a deeper relationship with the people in your group, each of you may have opportunities to talk about important, life-changing experiences. As you build relationships in the group, the trust you create brings encouragement on the journey, both when things are celebratory and when they are sorrowful. Not only that, but in this trust, God will work to lovingly guide you as the Holy Spirit speaks truth through your group members. All of us have times we need to be challenged and redirected in our walk with God. This often happens in our quiet time alone with God, but also happens within our groups as we develop deep, trustworthy relationships. Often, people who love us and know us can see things we cannot. It is loving for them to considerately bring those things to our attention gently and constructively. **Read Proverbs 12:18**. If you are not in a group, we have our Groups Rally this month. After each of the weekend services, you can walk through the gathering area to find out more about the groups that are available. For example, if you are looking for a group to teach you more about what it means to have a relationship with God, we have two incredible options for you:

- Monday evenings at 6:30pm, Rick and Sue Pribnow will lead a group of 8 people through "Foundations." This group allows you to ask questions like, "Is God Real?" "Does the Bible fit into world history?"
- Tuesday evenings at 6pm, Pastor Grant Schultz will lead a 10-week study, starting October 3rd, called "Alpha." During this 10-week class, you will discover (or rediscover) the beauty & significance of what it means to be alive, and what the Christian faith is all about. If you have group questions, or if you're interested in joining the Alpha Team as a Table Host, contact Grant Schultz at the church office at (715) 833-2050 or gschultz@jacobsowellchurch.church.

Pray and ask God to lead you to the group He has for you. If you are already in a group, pray about your commitment. Do you regularly attend the group? Why or why not? What can you do to make group life a priority? If you participate faithfully in a group and have seen the life change that occurs in relationships, pray about becoming a group leader. Remember: you don't have to know all the answers, or be super scholarly about the Bible. There are so many studies through Right Now Media, or on DVD, that will lead the teaching. You can be learning right along with your group. The important part is a willing heart to pursue Christ and help shepherd others on their journeys to know and become like Jesus.

Tuesday:

We have hundreds of relationships in our lives, but it is in our relationship with Jesus, as well as in a few deep friendships, where we are most deeply changed from the inside out and equipped to love the world around us. This is why, at Jacob's Well, we believe we were never meant to journey alone. We believe we were meant to do life with others. Who are you doing life with? Who are your companions?

In Scripture, we know Jesus had His disciples. King David had his mighty men. Moses had Aaron and Hur. **Read Exodus 17:11-13**. Our companions come alongside us and help strengthen our relationship with God. In the literal sense, Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands toward God. In your life today, are your companions leading you to know and become like Jesus? Why or why not? **Read Proverbs 22:24-25**.

If you realize that some of the people you may be close to are not leading you to know and become like Jesus, pray and ask God for wisdom. It is certainly okay to have friends you love and care for who are not believers; it is also important to remember that intentional pursuit of primary relationships with others who follow Jesus and can help you know and become like him is a priority for all believers. Why is this true?

We all need primary relationships that inspire and influence us to more fully follow Jesus. As you participate in the devotion today, perhaps you realize you are doing much to inspire and influence those around you to pursue Jesus. If this is true, what step do you need to take?

If you are coming alongside those you are closest to and they are coming alongside you—encouraging each other on the journey to know and become like Christ—take time to thank God for how He is at work. Thank Him for these friendships.

Wherever you are on your relationship journey, write out a prayer and ask God to help you take your next step.

Heavenly Father,

Friday:

Philippians 3:12-19

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained. ¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

In our Scripture from this past weekend, the Apostle Paul reminds us that many people walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. However, following Jesus does not include closing ourselves off from people who do not have a relationship with Jesus. It is important that our primary relationships include others who, like us, are pursuing Christ, and to prayerfully and continually seek others with whom God desires us to be in relationship.

Who in your family does not have a relationship with Christ?

Who in your neighborhood does not have a relationship with Christ?

Who do you work with who does not have a relationship with Christ?

Who are your acquaintances who do not have a relationship with Christ?

Through your relationship with the people you listed, they may want to know more about your relationship with Christ. This is a good thing! As the Holy Spirit leads, invite them to a weekend service at Jacob's Well. If they are a middle school or high school student, invite them to a Wednesday night service.

Pray for God to show you specifically who He wants you to pursue relationship with who is not a believer. These relationships are important. We don't want to shut ourselves off from people who do not know Christ. What we do want is to understand how to prioritize the relationships in our life so that our relationship with Jesus and those who know Him are always informing our other relationship.

What has God shown you about relationships this week? Pray about all you are learning. Ask God to help you discern what next step will help you grow in your relationship with Him.



DEVO | September 16/17, 2017

Monday:

“All life change comes through relationships.” Do you believe this statement to be true? Why or why not?

If you think about it, isn't it hard to think of a major life change you've experienced that didn't involve someone with whom you are/were in relationship? As spiritual beings, we know that life change—transformation—comes through a relationship with God through His Son Jesus.

Read 1 John 4:9 a few times and meditate on what those words meant for the intended audience all those years ago; then, find parallels in your own life to which you can apply those words.

Major life change also occurs through our relationships with family, friends and the other people we interact with each day. It is only through relationship that the two greatest commandments, spoken by Jesus, can take root in our lives and change us.

Read Matthew 22:36-40. What does Jesus tell us are the two greatest commandments?

How are you loving God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind? In other words, as we learned last week, how are you in pursuit of knowing and becoming like Christ?

How are you loving your family, friends and the people you interact with each day? In other words, how are you loving “your neighbor as yourself?” Use **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** as your guide. Write the verse here:

As you think about how you are loving God and other people in your life, write out some specific areas where you've grown and some areas where you honestly struggle to live out the two greatest commandments.

*Heavenly Father, help me take steps to know and become like Jesus, because I know my pursuit of Him leads me to love You with all my heart, mind and soul. Help me love my family, friends and the people I interact with each day, using **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** as my guide. I know as I journey with You and the people in my life, You will change me from the inside out. Help me see how I can better pursue Christ with people around me, because life change in Him happens in relationship. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Thursday:

Philippians 3:8-11

*⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ **that I may know him** and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

In our Scripture for this series, we learn that the Apostle Paul desires to know Christ. One of the ways Paul grew to know Jesus was through relationships. We see this throughout his letters in the New Testament. His writings, Romans through Thessalonians, are letters he wrote to specific churches, addressing what the churches were facing in the latter half of the first century AD. We will be diving into 1 Corinthians as a church two weeks from now. We want to learn what they were facing as individuals and as a church then, and how those things are similar to some things we face as individuals and as a church now. Nevertheless, in Paul's letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon we see a glimpse of his relationships with people. These letters reveal the power of relationships in Paul's life.

If we want to pursue Christ like Paul did, we embrace that relationships matter. Turn back in **Philippians to 2:21-22** as an example. Timothy also pursued Christ, and together he and Paul encouraged one another as they served. Who in your life pursues Christ and serves Him alongside you?

Serve is another way to intentionally take steps toward Christ-centered relationships and life change. If you serve during one of the weekend services or during Wednesday night youth, you will build relationships and grow alongside the people with whom you serve.

Are you involved in a ministry are at Jacob's Well? If so, what relationships have formed out of your service? How have these relationships impacted your life and your pursuit of Christ?

If you are not involved in ministry at Jacob's Well, are you involved in a ministry in the broader community?

Through our **Share** commitment, we build relationships with our ministry partners and with the people we serve together in Christ's name. How might God want to help you take steps to know and become like Jesus through our Serve and/or Share commitment?

Heavenly Father, like the Apostle Paul, I want to know Christ Jesus my Lord. Jesus, I want to be found in You, not simply doing religious rules. Grow my faith in You through my quiet time and through Godly relationships. Help me understand my next steps. Reveal to me those I am to pursue and those with whom I am to pursue You. Develop in me a desire to live the Serve and Share commitments. In Jesus' name, Amen.