

## Small Group Sermon Series

### Message 2: How Jesus Connected

Last week we talked about the fact that we are designed to connect. Let's review that for a moment:

We learned in that first message that it is not about just us and Jesus. All throughout scripture it is about you, Jesus and others. We learned that we are designed to connect. God did not create us to be alone. God created everything and said it is good, but He then looked at Adam and said it is not good for man to be alone. There is a god-shaped void in all of us, but there is also a people shaped void in all of us. We desire relationships. We desire friends, family and a sense of community. The bible teaches that it is a terrible thing for a person to fall and not have someone there to pick them up.

We also learned that human beings are a lot like Legos. Legos are designed to connect. A Lego by itself has no purpose whatsoever, but when you start connecting Legos you can make something beautiful.

We also talked about the trinity. The trinity is more than just a mystery, but it shows us that God has never been alone. It has always been God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that there are three gods, but one God. Three distinct persons so united and connected that they are one.

God is the one behind this idea of connecting. He told Israel on many occasions, "I am your God and you are my people". We are connected. Jesus said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father". We are so connected that if you see one of us you see all of us.

Today, let's look for just a few minutes on the subject "How Jesus Connected". Jesus spent 33 ½ years on the earth. He spent 3 ½ years doing public ministry. The end result of Jesus' coming into the world was not a new book on theology or a new code of ethics. The result was a new community. People whom society had devalued, discredited and disdained were now given value. Women, children, slaves and sinners were given new value by Jesus.

Do you remember when the disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus? Jesus had to rebuke the disciples and tell them that he wanted the children to come to him. Jesus was also labeled as the friend of sinners. This was not a positive label. This was a label that the religious leaders gave to Jesus to criticize him. Sinners were looked down upon. "The friend of sinners was a badge of honor for Jesus. He went to parties. He went to weddings. He had dinner with people that society in general had devalued. Jesus came and restored value to people by connecting with people.

When Jesus spoke of love, it was not in the abstract. What do I mean by this? He did not speak of love as just a tingly feeling. The love that Jesus spoke of was practical. It was a command. **John 13: 34 A new command I give you: Love one another.** In other words, you cannot love without being connected on some level. The command to love God was joined by the priority of loving your neighbor as yourself.

### Matthew 22:36-40

36 “Teacher, which command in God’s Law is the most important?” 37 Jesus said, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.’ 38 This is the most important, the first on any list. 39 But there is a second to set alongside it: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’ 40 These two commands are pegs; everything in God’s Law and the Prophets hangs from them.”

Loving your neighbor is placed alongside of loving God. These are not two options. You cannot do one of these commands without doing the other. Flowing out of your love for God is this command to love others. God’s # 1 commandment in the new covenant is all about connecting.

1. Connect to God. 2. Connect to others. We are called to connect vertically and horizontally. It is a picture of the cross of Christ. We were not created to be alone.

### John 1: 14

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

Jesus’ core value was to connect with us. He connects with us in our struggle. He connects with us in our weakness. He connects with us in our passion. He connects with us even in death.

## 1. Jesus Connected With “The Twelve”

Mark 3: 14 (CEV) Then he chose twelve of them to be his apostles, so that they could be with him. He also wanted to send them out to preach.

He chose twelve to connect with him. He did not just call them to preach the gospel, lay hands on the sick and cast out devils. All of these things were the result of connecting with Him. All of these signs are a result of connecting with the person of Christ. He said, “those who know me will do great exploits.” The word “know” in this scripture means intimate. In other words, those who really connect with me will do great exploits. The purpose for which they were called was to connect with Jesus. Your primary purpose is to connect.

Jesus was surrounded by crowds, but he connected with 12. He did not march around with thousands of followers, but he marched around with and hung out with 12 men. Why? So that they could be with him! Jesus not only proclaimed community, he constructed community.

The disciples were not to be understood first and foremost as individuals but as “The Twelve” connected with each other and with Jesus. Their individual identity was not as important as their call to connect. Numerous times throughout scripture they are called the 12. Community became so strong that it was no longer about individuals, but about community. It was about the group. It’s not about just you and Jesus, but it is about you, Jesus and others. You are not called to be isolated, but you are called to connect.

In the context of this community, they would learn the practice of love. These twelve disciples were not always the most intelligent and wise people. A lot of times they were knuckle heads. Most of us if we were honest we would have to admit that we probably wouldn’t have picked

these twelve. They fought over position. They argued about who would sit at the right hand of God. They went into cussing fits. They cut people's ears off. They denied Christ. They wanted to call fire down from heaven. They got mad and said things that they shouldn't have said. They doubted! They had lots of issues.

Our problem is that we want to join a community and connect with people only when we like everyone. We are willing to connect as long as there are no problems. The word like is interesting because the word like as the idea that we like people only when they are just like us. The challenge to community is that we are called to like people who are not like us.

**John 13: 35 (NLV) Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.**

I love this scripture because it does not say if you cast out devils the world will know that you are my disciples. It does not say that if you prophecy twelve hours a day that the world will know that you are my disciples. The scripture is clear that the world will know that we are disciples (followers of Christ) if we love each other. If we truly connect with each other in authentic loving relationships it will prove that we are disciples.

So many times we say things like, "if we could just see God do a few more miracles people would get saved." If we could just see the blinded eyes open it would change this community. I don't want to discredit these statements because I do believe that these things are a witness to the world that God is real and that we are the people of God. Do you remember the wilderness journey of the children of Israel? They seen miracle after miracle and they still died in the wilderness. Miracles and healings are great and we are supposed to see these things on a regular basis, but as far as proving to the world that we are authentic and disciples of Christ it is all about loving God and loving others.

When we think about Jesus we usually think about big crowds. We think about mass evangelism. We think about Benny Hinn size crusades. There are only a couple of these recorded in scripture. Jesus spent most of his time with "The Twelve". He spent most of his time with a small group. He spent time with them modeling the love of God. He spent more time with them than he did preaching the good news.

Because Jesus was intentional to connect with the disciples, these knuckle heads became a band of brothers. Jesus knew that the whole advancement of the kingdom of God hinged on whether or not this group survived. These twelve men had to make it. This was not about individuals. This was about people connecting with one another, supporting one another, and proving to the world that God exists through their community.

Many times our problem is that we try to change the world by our self. We get the lone ranger mentality. This is impossible. We have to be connected. Let's look at two of the disciples:

Simon the Zealot- A zealot was more than a person who had zeal. They were a political party (more like terrorists) and they hated Romans and Jews. They hated tax collectors. They felt like tax collectors were the scum of the earth. They actually wanted to kill tax collectors.

Matthew was a tax collector. When Jesus called the twelve he didn't find them all in a group and tell that group to follow him. He called them as individuals. As individuals they did not know who else would be coming to this fellowship.

These two men were coming from 2 different extremes. They were coming from two different extremes and they were being called into a close fellowship. They had to learn to forgive, love and lay pre-conceived ideas down. 2 Extremes met and were commanded to love God and love others.

I don't believe that this was coincidental. I believe that this was planned by God. God knew that these 12 would be a prophecy about the future. God knew that within His kingdom people were called to connect. They were called to get over their prejudices, misconceptions, and differences. God was showing us that he can bring people together that were once enemies. Jesus didn't just preach about this, but he demonstrated this.

## 2. Jesus Demonstrated The Connected Life

### John 13: 13-17 (Message)

13 You address me as "Teacher" and "Master," and rightly so. That is what I am. 14 So if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. 15 I've laid down a pattern for you. What I've done, you do. 16 I'm only pointing out the obvious. A servant is not ranked above his master; an employee doesn't give orders to the employer. 17 If you understand what I'm telling you, act like it--and live a blessed life.

This was Jesus' final moments on the earth. This is just a few days before he would be crucified. A lot of times we miss the magnitude of this moment. This moment has urgency in it. This moment is filled with intensity. This was really Jesus' final exam to his disciples.

He was letting them know that for 3 years he had been building this community. For three years I have been pouring into you. I have spent time with you. Do you understand why I have come? Do you get it? Do you understand that you cannot do this alone?

He didn't spend the last few moments teaching them how to do miracles. He did not spend the last few moments teaching them how to get a breakthrough. He spent the last few moments of His life teaching them the importance of community. He taught them the importance of serving each other.

We all know that back in bible times everyone's feet were dirty. They wore sandals and everywhere they went was dusty and dirty. The washing of feet was a normal practice because people's feet were usually dirty. The custom was that the person hosting a dinner was responsible for making sure that his guests' feet were washed.

Many scholars believe that Peter was actually the one hosting this. He was probably the oldest of the disciples. The point is that Peter was the one responsible for making sure that everyone's feet were clean. I think this makes sense because Jesus comes to him and he rejects Jesus. I don't want you washing my feet. Part of the reason that he rejected Jesus was because he was responsible for taking care of this to begin with. He was too proud to do it.

The way that they would sit meant that you had feet pretty close to your face.

The point is that everyone knew that they needed their feet washed, but no one moved. Jesus, then quietly gets up, girds himself with a towel and starts to wash his disciple's feet. Do you understand what I have just done? This was their final exam and Jesus told them that if they understood what he was doing and acted on it that they would live a blessed life. One writer said that blessed means being in the best possible situation in life. If you understand community, connecting, and serving you will be blessed.

### 3. Jesus also entrusted community!

Not only did Jesus connect with the twelve. Not only did he demonstrate the connected life, but He also entrusted community to his followers. Those who followed Jesus (those who were disciples) were now responsible to build community just like Jesus did.

Jesus left behind a committed community of 120 people. Approximately 120 saw him ascend to the right hand of God. He entrusted community to these 120 people.

#### Luke 24: 48-49 (Message)

48 You're the first to hear and see it. You're the witnesses. 49 What comes next is very important: I am sending what my Father promised to you, so stay here in the city until he arrives, until you're equipped with power from on high."

We often talk about being filled with the spirit. We talk a lot about being empowered with the spirit, but I want you to know that it is much more than that. Jesus wanted these 120 to become a community of the spirit. He wanted them to become a spirit empowered community. Jesus entrusted this community with a profound task which included being filled with His spirit. Don't go out and just do this, but wait until the spirit has been poured out upon you.

It was to the community of witnesses and not just to individuals that the commission was given.

#### Acts 2: 14 Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd.

This wasn't just Peter preaching, but this was the voice of the community. He stood up with the eleven. He was just a witness of the twelve. I can just imagine the other 11 saying preach it Peter. This was a representation of the entire community.

This is why they all spoke with tongues as the spirit gave them the utterance. Everyone was speaking and a community was formed. Jesus entrusted the witness of the gospel to a community of people. The community of believers actually became the means of establishing the validity and authority of their witness.

The church grew from 120 to 3000 in one day.

#### Acts 2:42-47 (Message)

42 They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers. 43 Everyone around was in awe--all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! 44 And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. 45 They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met. 46 They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by

meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, 47 as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

What impressed the people was not just a whole bunch of individual believers. By this shall men know that you are my disciples that you love one another. Jesus prayed that we would be one just like He and the father were one. Community was not optional. The essence of Christianity is unity.

This is more than just another message. This is where God is taking this church. I told you last week that Americans are the loneliest people in the world because we are so disconnected, but God is calling us to connect with each other.

Jesus connected. He established community. He proved how important community was in his final exam. Then he entrusted this to the disciples. When they put you in jail you will have a community to pray for you. When something good happens you can eat together to celebrate.

Does this mean that we will never have problems? No. Paul and Peter had a disagreement. Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement, but community was not broken. Those who follow Jesus have to look at this principle.