



BREAKING THE ICE

Do you like to hike in the woods? What's your favorite hiking trail?

At the beginning of his message, Pastor Kevin talked about the redwood forest and how the trees' roots are intertwined to help them lean on one another when the storm hits. Who in your life has been a pillar of strength for you to lean on when you need strength?

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This week Pastor Kevin talked about Jesus being the vine we need to connect to. What we know about vines is: they are connected to a root and they are connected with one another.

1. Who / what have you been connected to in the last week? Has that connection been helpful or hurtful? How?

We were created to connect to God and others. In fact, our connection to others starts the moment we are born into this world.

2. Besides family, who is the longest-running friendship you have in your life? Tell everyone what has been so special about this friendship.

Through various people in the Bible, we see where God was with them. He was with Moses as he went to Pharaoh to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Because God was with Moses, Moses was able to lead his people. Leading millions of people out of slavery was no small feat. Moses could NOT have done it without God. He had to stay connected to God and trust that with Him, Moses could do what God asked him to do.

3. Describe a time when you had to do something really hard. Did you do it alone or did you have someone helping you through the hard time?

In John 1:14, we see where God became flesh and walked among us. When God sent Jesus, He sent peace,

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grace, healing and a physical connection to us.

Read John 15:1 -5

4. How do you stay connected to Jesus? When you don't stay connected to Jesus how does your life feel different?

We can stay connected to a lot of things and not all of these things are good to connect to. Some cause anxiety, depression and confusion. When we connect to Jesus, He gives us a non-anxious presence and peace when things are uncertain.

There are three ways we can connect to Jesus and remain in Him: Look Up, Look In and Look Around. When we look up, we are reminded of a bigger story beyond us. The sky is vast, filled with God's glory.

Go outside, take a deep breath and look up at the sky.

Looking up can mean prayer, reading scripture and worship. All of these things are looking up to God and knowing He is bigger than the circumstances around us.

5. Do you have a scripture you go to when you need to be filled with God's peace? Share it with the group.

6. What other ways do you look up to feel connected to God?

Look In. When we choose to follow God, we choose to prioritize our connection to Him. When we are prioritizing other things, our hearts can connect to priorities other than God. These things may seem innocent in nature but can cause our hearts to be troubled and uncertain.

When our connection isn't to God first, anxiety and fear can creep in and cause us to react and do things that are sinful in nature. God doesn't ask us to be perfect but He does ask us to come to Him with our burdens and sin. When we tend to handle things ourselves, we tend to forget we need Him. We can forget we need His forgiveness of our sin and shortcomings to stay connected to Him.

7. Are there things in your life you need to ask forgiveness for so God can continue to prune you and help you be more like Him?

Look Around. God tells us, as we remain in Him we will bear much fruit. How we respond to others around us is a representation of how connected we are to Him. The more we are connected to Him, the more we bear his fruit.

In Galatians 5:23-24 it says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

8. Which fruit of the spirit comes easy for you? Which is more difficult?

We have a choice to react to our circumstances or to look up, look in and look around. When we focus on our connection to Him, He gives us what we need to remain in Him as a benefit for us and others.

9. Where can you be a non-anxious presence in the connections you have with others this week? Where can you demonstrate fruits of the spirit to others this week?

PRAYER

Father God, thank you that you are the vine and our number one source for the things we need in life. Help us remember that our connection to you is the most important thing in our lives. Help us draw near to you so we can be filled with your presence and bear fruit that resembles you. Help us remain a non-anxious presence so we can be strong for others who need to see you during times that may seem dark and uncertain.

ACTION STEP

Connect with others this week. Send each other encouraging words and scriptures. Pray for each other either over the phone or in-person (use wisdom in joining together due to the COVID-19 outbreak).