

March 30, 2014

4 Lent: Me I Want to Be, Part Four: Deepening My Relationships

Rev Ken Wratten at St. Stephen's, San Jose

Wk 1: Becoming more of the person God created: Renewing your Mind

Vision – think great thoughts

Intention – act in order to achieve the vision

Method – adopt new habits of life that move into the flow of the Spirit

Wk 2: Redeeming your Time; Reclaim times that you are moving away from the flow of the Spirit; be more self-aware.

Wk 3: Deepening your Relationships

John Ortberg writes, “An academic journal called *The Journal of Happiness Studies* uses the tools of research to identify what makes human life flourish. When researchers looked at what distinguishes quite happy people from less happy people, one factor consistently separates those two groups. It is not how much money you have; it is not your health, security, attractiveness, IQ, or career success. What distinguishes consistently happier people from less happy people is the presence of rich, deep, joy-producing, life-changing, meaningful relationships. Spending meaningful time with people who care about us is indispensable for human flourishing.”

We flourish, we become “the me I want to be”, through a commitment to community. Our model as Christians for commitment to community is Jesus Christ. He demonstrated taking 12 rather unlikely characters, and training them to become the most loving group in the world. One source defined three major pieces that summarize Jesus’ teaching on relationships.

Part One: **Everybody is welcome.** Luke 15:2, Jesus had the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttering about him, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” And he did; and the love he showed to them transformed them into apostles who brought blessings to slaves, the poor, children, the diseased and the dying.

We are all on this journey together, learning how to live into being who God created us to be. Each of our journeys is unique to ourselves, because our personality and temperament and gifts are unique to each of us. But by sharing the journey with each other, we can learn from each other, and support each other, and bring blessing to each other by committing to this faith community, and taking the risk to be in real relationship with each other. We get the most out of it when we invest the most into it; when we welcome everyone to be part of it.

Part Two: **Nobody is Perfect.** Matthew 7:1, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged... Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”

Rick Warren explains that each of us is uniquely comprised of five influences that SHAPE us:

Spiritual Gifts (Hospitality, comfort),

Heart (what we love to do),

Abilities (art, music, reading),

Personality (introvert, extravert),

Experience (life, other people, EGR people) (Each of us is VERY complicated.)

How many times in your life have you discovered that a first judgment of someone ended up being wrong? When we suppress judgment, when we accept that no one, not even ourselves, are perfect, we allow the flow of the Spirit to use our relationship with each other to learn from each other, and to be blessed by deeper relationships. If we wait to find the person without a quirk, or flaw, or idiosyncrasy, it will be a very long wait...

Part Three: **Anything is Possible.** Don't you love the testimony of the man who was healed from being blind since birth? John 9:25 The Pharisees asked him how he was healed. It could not be this man Jesus. He is a sinner. He healed you on the Sabbath. The man said, "I do not know if he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

Jesus embraces people. Jesus puts his Spirit in people and transforms their lives. Anything is possible. Anything. At the core of Jesus' power to transform us into the person God created us to be, is love. That love gets shared, nourished, practiced, strengthened, and produces blessings through the community that Jesus instituted – his Body in the world – the Church.

Everybody is welcome, nobody is perfect, and anything is possible. These three elements guide you and me in the fine art of relationship building. The fruit of that work is to be in the flow of God's Spirit more deeply than we can accomplish on our own.

There is more than worship that is happening here. You and I are led by Christ to commit ourselves to this faith community; that it may be the working laboratory to learn how to make relationships function well, grow deep roots, serve God faithfully, and transform each of us into the person God created us to be.

Amen.