

2.22.15 Relationships

Pre-intro intro: one week break from Mark...

***On Sundays we deal with:** God, eternity, purpose, truth, meaning.

***This is complex stuff and we have normally about 30 minutes. Today, I'm going to take a bit more time than normal.**

*Because of the nature of this setting...I paint with a broad brush.

*Your job is to with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the help of good friends...to fill in the fine brush details of your own life.

*Most questions...after sermons on Sunday mornings...relate to the "finer brush strokes" that I could not fill in with a sermon.

*Please don't be afraid to ask them...but if the question is..."why didn't you use a fine brush rather than a broad one?"

*Meaning..."You didn't say how this applies here and there, and what about this unique situation?"

*The answer is...

"Those are exactly the kinds of questions our small groups and your own personal relationships are intended to deal with."

"Small groups are not about getting a "A" in Bible class."

*Our relationships are about learning together how to live with God in his kingdom now...

*We help one another fill in the details as we pursue God's purposes for our lives together.

Intro: So, I'll get out my wide brush and let's paint.

*Many years ago I wrote a strongly worded letter to man in an attempt to compel him to not make a terrible decision...that he eventually made anyway.

*By the way, this was clearly a bad choice...he was leaving his wife and children with no good cause whatsoever.

*The letter was aimed at raising the stakes, showing what would likely be the long-term consequences of his decision.

-I was warning him, it was a wake up call...all that.

*I was good intentioned, but I was foolish.

*He did not receive the letter warmly and it did not alter his will at all...

*I was trying to "compel" him by the force of **my** will to make a good choice.

*I went beyond laying out the facts, presenting the truth of Scripture, giving my perspective...and then treating him as a person who was going to make his own decision.

*Instead I attempted to compel his choice by a letter...by my own efforts.

*I am not saying writing an impassioned letter is wrong...I am saying **my** strategy and thinking were wrong in this particular situation.

*In the end, he did what made sense to him...not what made sense to me.

*No amount of "me" wanting "him" to act a certain way was going to change the source of his choices...his heart.

***We all do what makes sense to us.**

***I wish I had spent more of the time I had with him talking about what made sense to him in his heart and why...and less time telling him what he ought to believe and how he ought to behave .**

*I wish I had focused on the gospel...and not just the "be saved" part.

*But the gospel of the kingdom..."The kind of life God has for us now is so good."

*I was talking with a friend about the many online conversations regarding the movie "50 shades of grey"

*Some are church folk urging unchurched folk "not to see the movie."

*I understand the sentiment and personally believe that **not** seeing the movie would be ideal for anyone.

*But again, it is an attempt to compel change from the outside in.

*In fact the more most people are told to "not to see" something because its "wrong"...the more likely it will make sense for them to go see it.

***In Prov. 9:17...Folly is personified and she cries out..."Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!"**

*The water is sweet and the food is delicious...because they are not supposed to have it.

*The enticement is in the fact that it is illicit...water is water, its not "sweet"

*"Ah, but it is, if you are not supposed to have this!"

*The next verse says that her "customers are destroyed."

*The fact is...unless the heart is changed...telling people "You shouldn't" makes them more likely to want it.

*I told my friend...If I was on Facebook...which by the way I have no conviction against but just don't find personally compelling (we all do what makes sense to us).

*If I was...I might try this "I've seen 50 shades of grey lived out in real life many times, always with devastating personal and relational consequences..."

-Question: "Why do you think it is, that we are consistently drawn to that which all of human experience has shown to be bad for us?"

-Question: "Some of you have parents who lived shades of grey, how did that turn out for you and your family...what are your thoughts?"

*We need to engage people at the level of what makes sense to them and why...

*Not just trying to "tack behavior of a certain type onto a life where that behavior makes no real sense to them."

*It has been said that one of the reasons the church loses much of its youth after they go off to college is because those youth were too often told to "believe what they don't believe."

*I have a good friend who took his youthful struggles with faith to a minister who told him..."Don't worry about all that...just believe."

*So..."Live a two story life...upstairs is faith where you are supposed to believe what you don't believe...downstairs is real life, where you believe what is real."

*Now how surprising is that he left the church as soon as he left his parents home?

*The church should be the one place where questions are welcome...and in community discussed and dealt with openly.

*This doesn't mean we don't believe or have firm convictions.

*I do believe in the facts of the faith...I believe the gospel is completely true, and real.

*I believe the Bible is the Word of God...I believe it because of my mind, my experience, my observations, my study...and because God has spoken to me.

*But I would never encourage you to believe what you don't believe.

*To act **on** what is true, like a commitment, even when you don't feel like it...that's a good decision.

*To act **like** you believe what you don't believe...that is not helpful.

*Heart change(transformation) requires: information (truth), application(training), and ultimately motivation(desire/will)

*But it is never accomplished by manipulation...including guilting people, or coercing people.

*God doesn't employ these strategies...he has never said to me...

*"Okay, Terry, that's the 10th time you have made that wrong decision..."

*"I am suspending your will until further notice...and for your own good I am going to impose my will on you..."

*"Robot mode activated."

*He shows me dignity I don't always deserve...other than the fact that he made me in his image...and that is dignity enough.

*I must treat people with that same dignity...no coercion, no manipulation.

*Last week Jim did a great job of describing how mere behavior modification is not the goal...but transformation is.

*We are not pushed in the direction of transformation by merely adding externals onto our lives.

*We are pulled in by a vision of a change of heart.

*This doesn't mean that disciplines or choices are unimportant

*But it means that the things we "do" are more about "training" than "trying."

*We are not "trying to change" by our behavior alone, we are "training for change"...

*What is the difference?

*When you "try" and fail...you are done...nice try...but fail!

*When you "train", failing does not stop you...the only way you fail in training is to stop training.

*Trying is where the discipline itself is the goal.

***Trying to have consistent QTs, that's your goal**...and then you sleep in 5 days in row...now that's called..."failure!"

*Training...goes something like this...

*"I would like to know Jesus better...I think a QT is a good way to accomplish that...but I have slept in 5 days in a row."

*Training would start asking the question, with help from friends, the Holy Spirit:

"Okay, I am doing what makes sense to me...sleeping in...so what is going on in my heart...my beliefs?"

*"Maybe I don't believe knowing Jesus is as valuable as watching TV at night and then sleeping in the morning."

*"Or maybe I don't believe a QT really is an important part of knowing Jesus."

*"Maybe, they haven't worked...because I don't really understand what they are."

***I'm doing what makes sense to me...why I am doing this and what does it say about what I really believe?**

***I am personally am too often in a hurry, and impatient.**

*To try harder to become patient has not ever worked well for me...at least not for long...what does that even mean?...do better!

*When I am impatient on the highway, or with a person, or a circumstance...

*I respond in ways that make sense to me on the inside...how I have trained my own heart to respond.

*What needs to change is my inside first, and what I really believe to be true.

*Then as that changes...I begin to respond consistently, differently on the outside...I have seen this proven true in my life.

***In small...but very encouraging ways...I have experienced change in this area.**

*It doesn't mean I don't try to treat people with patience, if my heart is full of impatience...of course I should...but I don't change that way... if that is all that is happening.

*It means I must address why I think it is ever a good idea to treat people with impatience.

*"Terry, I don't think ever think it is a good idea to treat people with impatience."

*That's good...but evidently I must, because I sometimes do it."

*We do what makes sense to us...over time this trains our reflexes, our habits.

*The place of discipline is not merely to "tack behavior modification onto my life."

*"I am impatient...must have better QTs."

*But rather to "train myself to become more like Jesus...who was and is patient."

*So, for me personally, just reading verses on patience didn't help much.

*I needed to contemplate God's patience for me, and the results of my impatience in my relationships, and my own lack of joy that results from my impatience.

*This is scrutinizing my own belief system...the Bible says this is true, and when I think about it...its proven true in my own life.

*"It's doing the math on my own impatience"...

*"Impatience plus my life plus relationships...equals...ugggh, don't like that."

*It helps me to: **To think about what matters most at the end...and therefore what matters most now.**

*Then as I ponder this...my beliefs start to line up with being patient with people...it makes sense me, it starts looks good and right and compelling.

*This happens for me...often in my QT...whether my QT lasts an hour or 5 minutes...is not the issue for me.

*The issue for me is whether the discipline of QT is "working" in terms of lining my life up with what is real...transformation into the image of Christ.

*It's not a box to check...it is a pathway to reality from unreality.

*I am Impatient, in a hurry, angry...and it makes sense to me.

*Then I stop, get before God, listen, read, reflect..."wait a minute...that makes no sense at all to me...what was I even thinking?"

*Many times I have come out of my QT and apologized to my family...I went in thinking my attitude was justified...I came out with my attitude aligned with reality.

*When I spend time talking to God, contemplating what matters, being still, reading the Bible and good books about God....and talking with people who love God

*I come away believing that...

*Relationships will matter most at the end...not getting somewhere a minute quicker, or convincing Christy to do and see things my way.

***With all that as a foundation...Let me tell you what I want to do with the remainder of our time together this morning.**

*This is what I have been praying for us this week...and will continue to pray for weeks to come.

*That we would..."**Would move towards establishing and strengthening the beliefs that what matters most at the end matters most now...and that relationships will matter most at the end, so relationships matter most now.**"

*In line with what we have discussed so far...I'm not asking you to try to believe what you don't.

*I am going to present to you what the Bible and reason and experience says about this.

*And also in line with our discussion...the test of whether we believe this or how much we believe this is found in our actions not what we give mental and verbal assent to.

*I want to present to you what the Bible says, what experience and reason say...and you use this to scrutinize your own belief structure...the beliefs that lead to your choices.

*My deeply held beliefs regarding this have driven my behavior related to relationships for many years.

*The longer I go...the more experience proves this to be true, real...I am convinced.

*The Triune God is real, his word is true...we should fully expect our real lives, personal experiences to bear this out...and they do.

***Why do I believe this...because of the different ways God has given us to "know" what's real.**

1. Revelation: Scripture: It has been revealed.

2. Experience: Human experience has proven this conclusively.

3. Reason: It is rational to believe this.

*Our reason can deceive us, but we are not to disregard it.

*God has made us in his image as rational beings.

*It doesn't take much thought, observation, or investigation to come to this conclusion.

*Is this relationship stuff...personality driven? Introvert/extrovert, etc.

-No, it is reality driven.

-The applications vary, but the principles are universal...regardless of personality type.

I. The Revelation of God regarding the priority of relationships:

Ultimate Basis for relationships: The Nature of God: The Trinity

*UR is who/what has always been and always will be.

*Only in Scripture do you find that ultimate reality is a relationship, not matter and energy...not a solo, mono-relational God...but a Triune God.

*A sweet society of three persons in one essence: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*The doctrine of the Trinity means that there is one God who eternally exists as three distinct Persons — the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*God is one in essence and three in person.

*Essence is **what** you are, person is **who** you are.

- *What this means is that from eternity past to eternity future the center of and foundation for all that exists or will exist is **relationship**.
- *A triune God who has existed in loving relationship needing no one in order to express and experience love.
- *He created us out of the overflow of relationship not a need to have it.
- *If matter and energy have always been here...the secular version of UR...and always will be here.
- *Then in the end, when all human life has gone silent...all evidence of human existence has been sucked into the exhaling and inhaling of impersonal cosmic expansion and contraction...
- *It will not matter one bit how you treated anyone, or how you were treated by anyone...why would it?
- *Why would it matter in the end...whether you had relationships or not if impersonal matter and energy have wiped us, our choices, everything about us clear out of existence?
- *However, if from eternity past and into eternity future...there has been and will be a Triune God in loving relationship within his own being and with us...it matters in ultimate ways how we treat others.
- *So you see, what you believe about the very nature of God...has bearing on what you believe about being nice to that annoying person at work.
- *Or how you treat your spouse or roommate.
- *Mother of four In Las Vegas got caught up in a road rage incident last week.
- *She had a confrontation with the man who she had a problem with his driving...taking her son with her she tracked the man down...her son was armed and the suspect shot at them killing the mom.
- *Crazy, empty stuff happens all the time...Why not humble yourself? Why not pray for the annoying driver? Why is your identify tied to what someone you don't know says about you on a road, or flies a finger at you?
- *What we believe has bearing on what we do and what we do has bearing on what we become.
- *God is loving, giving, patient, sacrificing...this is the foundation of reality itself.
- *I should humble myself, I should sacrifice for others...I should want to...I should want to want to.
- *"But, Terry I don't understand the Trinity, what does that mean?"
- *Means you human and honest.
- *I don't understand any human being completely either...but I do understand what it means to have relationship with people, and that nothing matters more in my life than relationship with God and people.
- *What is clear from Scripture is that UR is relationship...the Triune God.

*The basis of all reality...is loving relationships...ponder that.

*Now, look at what Jesus said about relationships.

II. Jesus and what matters most.

*He was asked about the greatest commandment...same as asking...what matters most in life and into death?

Luke 10:27 He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

*This sums up the truth, the essence of human existence, the priority of our very lives...

*Loving God and loving others is foundational for our existence...nothing matters more.

*He also shows how they are interrelated...

John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

*You reveal your love for Jesus, and that you "believe" he is worthy to be followed...most by your love for others.

*We show what we believe, really believe about Jesus...by our actions of love to each other.

*Then John writes a clarifying "negative version" of this truth.

1John 4:20 If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

*"I am a believer...I love God."

*"I don't however, love you, in fact I hate you."

*Then you are not a believer **in** or lover **of** God.

***This is what Jesus taught...but how did Jesus live?**

A. He continually left the crowds to enjoy relationship with God the Father and was lead and nurtured by the Holy Spirit.

B. He had an inner circle, outer circle, and a wider circle of friends...he clearly treasured, nurtured and pursued these relationships.

C. As he suffered and died you see him treasuring relationships...he handed off care of his mom to a friend he loved.

John 19:26

D. He valued relationships with all manner of people...treasured them above tradition and ritual and protocol and his own well-being.

***1John 2:6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.**

*He walked/lived treasuring relationships.

III. NT: "One Anothers"

“One another” is two words in English, but it’s only one word in Greek: ἀλλήλων (*ah-LAY-loan*). It’s used in 100 times in 94 New Testament verses.

When you look at these verses, a few common themes show up.

1. Unity. One third of the one-another commands deal with the unity of the church.

*Being "one" with each other.

*Sounds like something modeled by the very nature of God.

*Very practically means...believing the best, giving the benefit of the doubt, being for one another.

2. Love. One third of them instructs Christians to love one another.

*Sacrificial love, looking for ways to show love.

3. Humility. Deferring to one another, putting others first.

*Not making life about myself, but showing the humility of Christ...who lived putting others first.

*Scriptures are clear...but what does your own experience tell you about this?

IV. Experience

*What have you experienced in your own life?

-When relationships are good, you can put up with almost anything.

-When they are bad, everything becomes intolerable.

*Over and over we see people with everything, except good relationships...living miserable lives.

*Over and over we see people with very little, except good relationships...living happy lives.

*What is the basic orientation of humans?

*Relationships.

*Hitler, arguably one of the most twisted and ruined of human souls...valued some relationships.

*When he died a long-time lover died with him...yes they were sick, but even in their sickness they were drawn to relationships.

*Babies can develop lifelong mental/social problems from a lack of "relationship"

*POWs in desperate situations can survive if they can have some simple contact with others.

*Tom Hanks, movie..."Castaway" made an imaginary friend from a volleyball...Wilson...to keep from losing his mind.

-Just a movie, yes...but a writer understood something.

*Best and worst part of any life is good relationships... or lack of them

*We have looked at benefits of relationships but what is really important for us to understand if we are to fully believe all this is the cost of these relationships.

V. Cost of Relationships

*Most of us truly do believe in the priority of relationships.

*We are frequently surprised at the cost of gaining and maintaining good relationships.

*And in many instances unwilling to pay the price required.

*So, we believe they are valuable...but not quite worth the price required...so our choices reveal what we believe about relationships.

***Matt. 13:44-46 Jesus tells parables of a treasure in a field and a pearl of great price.**

*These stories are about depth of relationship with Jesus...there is no price we can pay for salvation, but of course there is a price for depth of relationship.

*But the men in the stories are not nervous about having to pay the price, they were only nervous that they may not have the opportunity to pay the price to get the treasure.

*In the gospels there are those who sadly walk away from Jesus and those who joyfully follow Jesus...but no story of anyone sadly following Jesus.

*Two weeks ago...Matthew walked away from riches and threw a party.

*Counting the cost of discipleship is not about making us miserable to see what we are giving up...finally say..."Okay, okay...I'll follow you but, man, look at what this is costing me!"

*That's not the Biblical model of counting the cost.

*It is to bring us to a point of clarity and decisiveness...to help us to see the value of relationship with Jesus.

*The man with the pearl and the treasure counted the cost...and with great joy paid the price.

***Me in college:** I remembered last week coming to this conclusion in my heart as a 19 year old...I traded with joy...my life, my plans to follow Jesus.

*No I was not perfected but I have not gone back on the path...it still looks like treasure to me, more so now than then.

*Relationship with Jesus is the treasure that nothing we might value can compare with.

*Relationship with Jesus, following him as our master, teacher, Lord, friend...means we will value what he values, live as he would live if he were living our lives.

*He would live our lives treasuring people, pursuing relationships, nurturing them, protect ing them...paying a price, with great joy for them.

***I pray you will see paying the cost of relationship with others as making a really, really, really good trade.**

VI. Relationships that run long and deep: They never go on sale, but they are always a good buy.

*Sometimes we look at a relationship that is meaningful and healthy and "I want that, how much?"

*I'm talking generally about relationships of all kinds...marriage, friendships, family...all manner of relationships that are helpful, meaningful, and last a long time.

*Of course I am talking in analogy...not paying real money.

*"\$20"

*"\$20?"

*"I'll give you \$10."

*"It costs \$20."

*"Humm, when will it go on sale?"

*"Never does, always costs full price."

*Husbands...I want my wife to have depth of friendship, to be secure, wise, peaceful, loving...have priorities in order...grow in her faith.

*That will cost you...you will have to pay out time, trust, coffee money, effort to watch kids.

-Attitude...you need to joyfully, send her off to be with a friend...because it is a great trade on your part for her.

*Men's retreat this summer, about 22 hours total time away...wives, the largest factor in your husband going or going joyfully will be you.

*I'm not trying to make you believe what you don't...but just consider this between now and June.

*What would it take for you to believe that saying home with the kids on a Friday night while your husband went and "played" with a bunch of guys from church...is a really, really good trade on your part?

*So much so you send him with joy, with expectancy...no hint of guilt.

*"Terry there is no cost us to having relationship with Jesus."

*Don't confuse salvation with depth of relationship.

*No, there is no cost to receiving the gift of salvation...but there is a cost for growing in relationship.

*A cost means simply to trade one thing for another.

*Money, time, effort...whatever to grow.

*I cannot have relationship with anyone if I unwilling to pay the price necessary to have that relationship...I must trade my life for that.

*The cost of good relationship is always going to be full price, but it is always going to be a good buy.

***I cannot compel you to believe this...**that's not my stewardship anyway.

*My stewardship is to bring the truth of God before our ears, hearts, and minds.

*May God himself drive his truth home by his Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION:

***Let's see what this looks like: from the Trinity to our own lives.**

Within the Trinity:

*Loving relationship is not eternal "warm fuzzies"

"Love is the disposition to bring good to the beloved."

*Love is manifest in the Trinity by each member putting the interests of others first.

*A relationship void of jockeying for position, with no competition, no envy...each wanting the good of the other.

Spirit: John 14:26 "The Holy Spirit will be sent by the Father in the name of Jesus and he will remind them of everything Jesus said to them."

*Holy Spirit coming and His role?... to point to Jesus.

Jesus: Luke 22 "Not my will, Father, but yours be done."

*I must go, so the Spirit will come.

*Jesus pointing the Father and introducing the Spirit.

Father: Baptism of Jesus...Matt. 17:5 "This is my priceless son, I am pleased with him, listen to him"

*The Trinity is God the Father, Son, Spirit...eternal relationship...living in unimaginable joy...saying "You first"

*Is this any surprise to us?

*Doesn't experience show us that this is the essence of reality...who are the most joyful souls now and in history?

*Terry, History shows only the brutality of humans...you need to read more or different history.

*Watching documentary on Civil War...

*I am overwhelmed by the cruelty of humanity...then saw people laying down their lives for people they don't know...the beauty of selfless humanity.

*The history of humanity proves this point...both in the selfish acts and the selfless acts...the proof is in the fruit.

*There has never been, never will be a happy "me first" person.

*Have you ever met a truly joyful, content, pleasant and self-centered person in your life?

*We are invited into the joy of God by taking on the attitude (approach to life) of God.

Phil. 2 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus....who is God himself who emptied himself for our sake.

COST:

a. I have been hurt before...yes, you may be hurt again.

-But there are many people who will mean you no harm only good, but even they will imperfect and not get things right every time.

*You must be generous and patient with them.

b. They may not reciprocate...that is true, they may not.

-But you will experience joy in loving others well, even if you have some pain from not being pursued in return.

-If you become a pursuer of relationships in **order to bless other**...you will have no shortage of good relationships in time...I have no doubts about this.

c. I have tried before it didn't work...all that effort for nothing.

-If you tried to love people and build relationships then it was not for nothing...you without question benefited from the price you paid.

-If you made it all about yourself, it is no wonder you found it unsatisfying...that has been one of our main points.

d. I don't want relationships like this, I don't believe I need them...its not worth it to me.

-I understand, I don't agree, but I do understand.

-I will keep my word and I will not try to tell you to believe what you do not believe.

-I will only ask you to look into your own heart and life and "do the math."

-Are the things you believe to be more valuable than relationship delivering what they promise in your life?

e. Sacrifice: Making and keeping long, deep, good relationships can be and will be inconvenient.

-I need my friends when my need is hard on them.

-My friends sometimes need me when their need is hard on me.

*But the inconvenience is part of the price and the joy.

f. Grace: "My friends are not the way I wish they were, they are just the way they are."

-I pray for and hope for and do what I can for my friends to change and become more like Christ...as they do for me.

-At the same time...I am glad to have them as my friends in their current condition...as they are.

g. Restraint: Your only role in changing your friends is to love them...not to nag, pester, or judge them into change.

*Love does not mean giving people what they want or resourcing them so that they may do what they should not do...it does mean that we pursue their good even at the expense of our own.

***Terry, I have good, deep relationships...what am I to do with this message?**

*Be encouraged & be grateful...treasure them, nurture, them protect them.

*What you have is supposed to be the norm, but sadly is not...let the light of your healthy relationships shine so people can see and glorify your Father in heaven.

*Cast vision for what you have experienced to those who have not...be patient and positive as you do.

*As much as possible, open your circle a bit wider and invite others in...both from inside and outside the walls of the church.

***What are you to do?...**Be joyful, grateful, happy...because God has given you these wonderful gifts.

CONCLUSION:

*Okay, broad strokes...you have some work to do filling in the details.

*Lots of questions that are unanswered about all this...that's good...find someone to talk with about this...maybe that in itself will be a doorway to deeper friendship.

*Next week we will be back in Mark, learning from the Lord Jesus himself, about the priority of relationships.

*Let's Pray.

SMALL GROUP NOTES
Feb. 22, 2015 Relationships

Group leaders: *You will want to work through these questions ahead of time and be ready to give personal examples to help others know how to make personal applications. You also will probably want to choose the questions you think best fit your group, there are likely too many to deal each one in depth.*

1. Terry said this about a friend he attempted to compel to make a good decision....*"I wish I had spent more of the time I had with him talking about what made sense to him in his heart and why...and less time telling him what he ought to believe and how he ought to behave."*

*Why do you think he said this? Do you agree/disagree?

2. Can you think of a time when you attempted to "compel" belief or obedience in another person?

3. How did it turn out/what did you learn?

4. Terry said...

"To act **on** what is true, like a commitment, even when you don't feel like it...that's a good decision."

*To act **like** you believe what you don't believe...that is not helpful."

*Talk about the differences in those two statements.

*Talk about why it isn't helpful to encourage/compel people to "believe" what they don't believe.

*How might this impact a child or a teenager?

5. Here is a simple model for Heart change (transformation):

A. Information (truth)

B. Application (training)

C. Motivation (desire/will)

*What happens if one part of this model is left out or a single part is over emphasized?

6. "Trying is where discipline is the goal, training is where discipline is designed to accomplish a goal."

*Describe a time when you have made your relationship with God into "trying."

7. What is a "change" you would like to see in your life and how could you "train" to that end?

8. Terry said: "We do what makes sense to us."

*Can you think of an area of your life (past or present) where you have "believed" something or thought you did but your actions demonstrated something else?

9. Terry's prayer for our church was...**"That we would move towards establishing and strengthening the beliefs that: 1. What matters most at the end matters most now, 2. Relationships will matter most at the end, so relationships matter most now."**

*How would you rate your own perspective on the value of making, nurturing, and treasuring relationships?

*Has that perspective changed over the years and if so in what ways and why?

10. Discuss how the reality of the Trinity becomes the basis for relationships and the basis for understanding what life is all about.

11. Jesus said: **Luke 10:27** “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind**”; and, **‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’**”

*In this summary of the purpose of life Jesus gives in verbal form what the reality of the Trinity demonstrates...the priority of relationships.

***1John 4:20 "If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."**

*This is a strong negative version of Jesus' "Great Commandment." Do you believe this verse is really saying that a person who "hates" others **cannot** love God?

*Why do you think that and what are the implications for your belief?

12. What have your own life experiences taught you about relationships? They could be positive or negative, personal or something you observed in others.

13. If you are convinced of the benefit of relationships are you ever bothered or put off by the cost of them?

*Why or why not?

14. What are some of the costs of gaining, maintaining, and treasuring good relationships?

15. What are costs that are keeping you from developing deeper relationships?

16. What some beliefs, fears, and/or past experiences that are keeping you from seeing these costs as being worth the price?



***Small groups are not about getting
an "A" in Bible Class...***



We all do what makes sense to us

***I wish I had spent more time talking
about what made sense to him in
his heart and less time telling him
what he ought to believe and how
he ought to behave.***

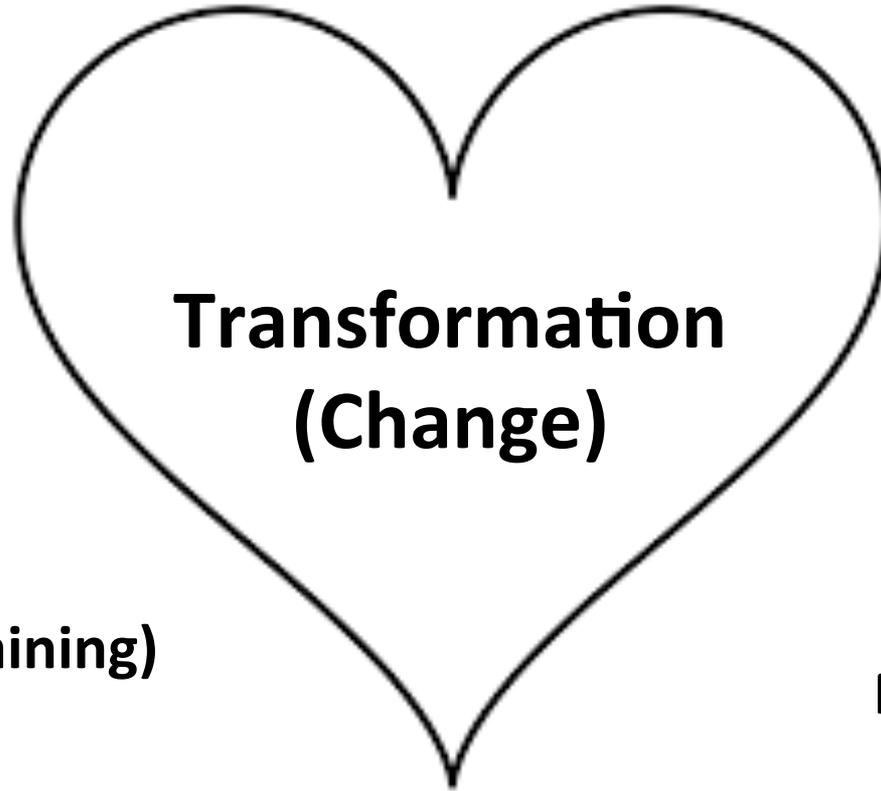
**“Stolen water is sweet; food eaten
in secret is delicious!”**

Proverbs 9:17

We must not tell people they must believe what they don't believe.



Information (Truth)



**Transformation
(Change)**



Application (Training)



**Motivation
(Desire)**

Trying + Failure = *Defeat*

Training + Failure = *Get up, Move on*

**Do the "math" on your own belief
system...**

Time with God is not a "box to check" it is a pathway back to reality from unreality.

"I pray that we will move toward establishing and strengthening the beliefs that... 1. What matters most at the end matters most now... 2. Relationships will matter most at the end, so relationships matter most now."

Epistemology: How We "Know"

Revelation

Reason

Experience

The Ultimate Basis for relationships: The Trinity

**God is one in essence and three in
person**

**Essence is what you are, person is
who you are.**

**From eternity past to eternity
future the center of all that exists or
will exist is relationship.**

He (Jesus) answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.””

Luke 10:27

**"By this all men will know that you
are my disciples, if you love one
another."**

John 13:35

If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

1 John 4:20

**"Whoever claims to live in him
must walk as Jesus did."**

1 John 2:6

"One another"

100 times in 94 verses

**What have you personally
experienced?**

The cost of relationship

**Good relationships never go on sale,
but they are always a good buy.**

A "cost" simply means something traded for something else.

When you choose to pay a "cost" it means you valued what you gained more than what you lost.

-We all do what makes sense to us-

"Love is the disposition to bring good to one who is loved."

Love in the Trinity = "You first!"

***You will never meet a truly joyful,
content, pleasant and self-centered
person.***

**"Your attitude should be the same
as that of Christ Jesus..."**

Phil. 2

Counting the Cost

**Be encouraged, Be grateful, Be
invitational**