

<I am a Rock>

We have been looking over the past few weeks at relationships because as much as we would like to say we don't need them we are actually created for them

And the majority of who we can become and what we can accomplish requires relationships

Everything we can be as followers of Christ requires relationships

We would like to declare ourselves to be a rock or an island, as the song said

*I've built walls  
A fortress deep and mighty  
That none may penetrate  
I have no need of friendship, friendship causes pain  
It's laughter and it's loving I disdain  
I am a rock  
I am an island*

Those words were ones I could echo whole heartedly, but I am learning the value of, the need for, and the importance of relationships

“A deep sense of love and belonging is an irreducible need of all women, men, and children. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong. When those needs are not met, we don't function as we were meant to.”

*A rather crude and cruel experiment was carried out by*

*Emperor Frederick, who ruled the Roman Empire in the thirteenth century. He wanted to know what man's original language was: Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. He decided to isolate a few infants from the sound of the human voice. He reasoned that they would eventually speak the natural tongue of man. Nurses who were sworn to absolute silence were obtained, and though it was difficult for them, they abided by the rule. The infants never heard a word, not a sound from a human voice. Within several months they were all dead.*

We were created for relationship

And we suffer greatly when we don't have them

The problem is we also suffer with them  
which is often what keeps us from  
relationships

The two commands Jesus spoke for us to live by

The commands that are the basis of our conduct as  
believers

What is most important for us to be doing

We have looked at them before

Matthew 22:36-39 New Life Version (NLV)

**36 "Teacher, which one is the greatest of the Laws?" 37 Jesus said to him, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest of the Laws.**

***39 The second is like it, 'You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.'***

You cannot fulfill these most basic commands of Jesus without relationship

In fact our faith is a relationship.

We know that Jesus came to open the door to relationship with us and offer eternal life

And Eternal life is

John 17:3 The Voice (VOICE)

***2-3 because You have given Me total authority over humanity. I have come bearing the plentiful gifts of God; and all who receive Me will experience everlasting life, a new intimate relationship with You (the one True God) and Jesus the Anointed (the One You have sent).***

You also cannot fulfill the command to be wholehearted that we looked at a couple weeks ago, without relationships

To engage God and our world wholeheartedly requires us to build relationally and to open our hearts to those relationships

Relationships are central to everything we as followers of Christ believe and are called to be and to do

As much as we would like to ignore and refuse this truth it is central to us and we seriously limit ourselves when we choose not to enter into

relationship

So much so that I am coming to believe that we actually limit our relationship with God because of the condition of our relationships with others

Turn in your bible to 1 John 4

There is a scripture passage that I am coming to see differently as I learn more about myself and who I am called to be and become

It is a scripture that has bothered me my whole life

It is usually one that at times created guilt and condemnation

Because I never felt like I was doing it right or enough

And like most people I resisted the need to enter in because of how I felt about relationships

1 John 4:20-21 The Message (MSG)

***20-21 If anyone boasts, "I love God," and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won't love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can't see? The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You've got to love both.***

We know the truth that we have to love others

And the way we love others actually demonstrates  
our love for God

You cannot say you love God and not love  
those around you

I have begun to read this passage, and I don't believe it is  
stretching the message at all

If you cannot have a relationship with those you  
can see, how can you say you have a relationship  
with God whom you cannot see

So I have tried to build relationships ever since and  
usually not successfully I might add

There is a still a large part of me that is resistant to  
relationship

A comment some of you have made as well

I felt as the song lyrics stated

I have no need of friendship, friendship causes  
pain

If I never loved I never would have cried

So I began to look at my life as I understood all this and  
wondered over the years why

Why do I resist relationship  
What am I afraid of

What am I hiding from

I wasn't afraid of a relationship with God at all

Because I knew that God was safe

We looked at what it meant to be a safe person a couple of weeks ago

With God there is no judgment or criticism

And I simply know I am loved, accepted and forgiven regardless

And this is where all our relationships are meant to begin

As Christians it all begins with God

We love because He first loved us 1John 4:19

Love comes from God 1John 4:7

God is love 1John 4:8

The origins of our relationships with others are in our relationship to God

So we can have a relationship with God and not others. It begins there

But our relationship with God requires us to build relationships with others and the depth of our relationships here allows our

relationship with God to deepen as well

We are created for connection

Connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued

We can establish that connection with God but we tend to have difficulty with doing with others

I began searching in my own life for an answer to the problem and I discovered that it wasn't a unique problem to me

The cause of my struggle was something every single person faces

There is something that we face because it is an innate trait in humanity

I discovered that what keeps people out of relationships is the feeling of shame

When I thought about shame I didn't think it was something I struggled with

I didn't think I had anything I was ashamed of

but as I grew to understand what it was I began to realize exactly how deeply it was ingrained inside me

And I learned that there was no way around it, the only victory was in facing and going through it

But what is shame

I used to define it as feeling like you had done something horribly wrong – failed in some way

So I thought I had overcome it

I didn't have those feelings

Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.

Shame is basically the fear of being unlovable

Shame is all about fear. We're afraid that people won't like us if they know the truth about who we are, where we come from, what we believe, how much we're struggling, or, believe it or not, how wonderful we are when soaring

I discovered that shame is universal and one of the most primitive human emotions that we experience. The only people who don't experience shame lack the capacity for empathy and human connection.

We're also all afraid to talk about shame. The less we talk about shame, the more control it has over our lives.

Shame can come from many places

It can be things we have done



If anyone finds out about...

It can be from things done to us. We can be the victim and still feel shame

It can come from experiences and things said to us growing up

For me it was the feeling of never being enough

The feeling like you never arrive,  
every time you think you  
accomplished something someone  
had gone and moved the goal posts

And that is a deep feeling many people have

Just finish the statement for yourself

I am not .... enough

Skinny  
Pretty  
Smart  
Talented  
Confident  
Rich

The feeling inside all of us that we are not worthy and if anyone ever gets close enough to us they will know how unworthy we are and will walk away leaving us high and dry, that feeling is shame

And that feeling is what drives many people to be something or someone

I must be enough to belong

We don't believe we are worthy and so we push for it from our accomplishments

We work to gain our worth

This includes Christians

If I read my bible enough  
If I witness, pray, speak in tongues  
enough

when we struggle to believe in our worthiness, we hustle for it. The hustle for worthiness has its own soundtrack and for those of you who are my age and older, it's not the funky "Do the Hustle" from the '70s.

It's the cacophony of shame tapes and gremlins—those messages that fuel "never good enough."

"What will people think?"

"You can't really love yourself yet. You're not \_\_\_\_\_ enough." (pretty, skinny, successful, rich, talented, happy, smart, feminine, masculine, productive, nice, strong, tough, caring, popular, creative, well-liked, admired, contributing)

"No one can find out about \_\_\_\_\_."

"I'm going to pretend that everything is okay."

"I can change to fit in if I have to!"

"Who do you think you are to put your thoughts/art/ideas/

beliefs/writing out in the world?”

“Taking care of them is more important than taking care of me.”

All of these arise from shame and the struggle to be worthy or to feel worthy of relationship of being loved and belonging. Of having connection

Add to that the problem of as we feel the shame inside, we are programmed to see it everywhere

One person wrote “The shame glasses I wear almost all the time mean that every story looks like shame to me. Every punchline, every plot twist—they’re all the same: you’re not good enough.”

I used to read the story of Peter walking on water differently than I do now since I came to understand this

When Jesus said to Peter after rescuing him ““You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?” I used to see that as derogatory

I was programmed like we all are to focus on the fault

I felt it was Jesus saying When are you going to get it together Peter.

I used to think Jesus was focusing on the negative and moving the goal post

Now I read that story and see and hear the pride in Jesus' voice

Peter you did it, you walked on water

You could have come further if you hadn't  
lost your focus, but you walked on water

Jesus identifies the problem but also  
congratulates Peter

The exact same response we give children making  
their first steps

We don't focus on the fact they fell

We cheer them for the fact they took the  
step and encourage and correct so they can  
take more

The question why did you doubt? Is not what's wrong  
with you? Not the frustrated and rhetorical, "Why on earth  
did you do that?" It's a question, an invitation into  
conversation, a way of saying, "I'm here and I care, and  
let's solve this together."

All of us experience and feel shame and it limits where we  
are willing to grow and how much of ourselves we are  
willing to allow others to see

The problem is there is no way to circumvent the  
feeling

The people who overcome feelings of shame are not those  
who have defeated the feeling

Everyone everywhere feels the feelings of shame

Those who overcome the feeling and don't  
allow it to control them are simply those  
who have come to understand their  
worthiness

They are not sitting in silence hiding

The only thing shame needs to grow and control us  
is secrecy, silence and judgment

the less we talk about shame, the more we will  
struggle with it.

When something shaming happens and we  
keep it locked up, it festers and grows. It  
consumes us. We need to share our  
experience. Shame happens between  
people, and it heals between people. If we  
can find someone who has earned the right  
to hear our story, we need to tell it.

Our stories are not meant for everyone.  
Hearing them is a privilege, and we should  
always ask ourselves this before we share:  
“Who has earned the right to hear my  
story?”

Overcoming shame is done simply by walking through it  
with someone who has earned the right to take the journey  
with you

Without it we can never truly feel like we belong

and belonging is something we all need and deeply desire

true belonging begins with us

it only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance

If we want to fully experience love and belonging, we must believe that we are worthy of love and belonging.

When we can let go of what other people think and own our story, we gain access to our worthiness—the feeling that we are enough just as we are and that we are worthy of love and belonging.

When we spend a lifetime trying to distance ourselves from the parts of our lives that don't fit with who we think we're supposed to be, we stand outside of our story and hustle for our worthiness by constantly performing, perfecting, pleasing, and proving.

Our sense of worthiness—that critically important piece that gives us access to love and belonging—lives inside of our story.

There are four things we need in our lives if we want to overcome shame and its influence in our lives. Four things which help us to own our story and heal our sense of worth

Four things that researchers have discovered that people who overcome shame have

1.They understand shame and recognize what messages and expectations trigger shame for them.

Everyone's triggers are different. What are yours

Ask yourself Is there something about me that if other people know it or see it will make me unworthy of connection

2.They practice critical awareness by reality-checking the messages and expectations that tell us that being imperfect means being inadequate.

So many of the messages we hear that trigger shame in us are imagined. They come from the shame filters we all wear.

Instead of wondering and imagining someone is upset ask

Ask yourself critical questions to discover is my feeling because of a trigger or something that is actually happening

<are they angry because of me?>

Be aware of what your feeling and don't hide from it but ask why am I feeling this

3.They reach out and share their stories with people they trust.

We need to talk out the feelings we are having and why we think we are having them but only with someone who has earned the right to have the conversation

Only when we can honestly talk about the feelings can we overcome them

In order for connection to happen we have to allow ourselves to be really seen

The only thing that keeps us from connection is the fear that we are unworthy of connection and we only overcome the fear by sharing the fear with someone

And only with someone who can respond  
“We’ve got this; we’ll do it together. Your failure doesn’t rattle me. Your limitations don’t bother me.”

Someone who will listen, hear, value and understand what you are sharing

4.They speak shame—they use the word shame, they talk about how they’re feeling, and they ask for what they need.

We hide because we feel like we are the only ones who are feeling this way and people won't accept us if they find out

But we are not that unique.



And talking about the feeling and actually  
being open is how the healing and freedom  
can come

We may not like doing it but it is how it works

James 5:16 Living Bible (TLB)

16 Admit your faults to one another and pray for  
each other so that you may be healed.

Shame hates it when we reach out and tell our story.

We miss out on the relationships we so desperately need  
because we don't reach out

And when we don't reach out the feeling inside  
intensifies

Because shame loves and needs secrecy

And it is defeated by accepting the reality  
we have and sharing with someone else and  
receiving their acceptance

Connection is the energy that is created between people  
when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can  
give and receive without judgment.

And that connection is the foundation for all healthy  
relationships

Who we become is up to us, but the becoming is found in

the connection and relationships we were created for and  
so desperately need