

TALK TO ME



EVERYONE NEEDS SUPPORT, COUNSEL AND SOMEONE TO TALK WITH

Scripture:

Matthew 18:15-20

15. "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.
16. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.
17. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.
18. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
19. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.
20. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

1 Corinthians 4:14-21

14. I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.
15. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.
16. I urge you, then, be imitators of me.
17. Therefore I sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.
18. Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you.
19. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power.
20. For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.
21. What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?



A TRIUMPHAL SPIRIT

Our world is supported by the learning of the wise, the justice of the great, the prayers of the good, and the valor of the brave. (Muhammad)

Wisdom, justice, prayer, valor. Surround yourself with people like this and your life will be filled with good models and worthy goals.

I've had three scriptures in front of me this week. They are wise, they are just, and brave. They reflect their authors. One was written from prison, and another, probably written in hiding. They were written to fledgling churches, and erratic and vacillating disciples. The way these three scriptures are connected was not immediately obvious to me. Do they have anything in common? They are about

a father's discipline, competition among disciples looking for position and favor, and something akin to mentoring. They come from the letters of Hebrews, Corinthians, and the Gospel of Matthew. So what do they have in common?

We live in an imperfect world filled with imperfect relationships. Yet there is a spirit in almost every heart that tries to overcome that in its own way. In the process of developing relationships, discipline and accountability, we are given the opportunity to find our own happiness and to discover love. These three scriptures are about relationships.

I

1 Corinthians 4

WALKING THE TALK

In the life of the early church, people said things they didn't mean. People heard things that were never said. People lived with stresses we could never imagine: foreign enemies, teachings of parents and significant adults that were bound in time and culture, and needed to be updated. That is not to mention their own raging hormones and health. They needed what we need. Their scriptures were prayers for support, counsel, and sometimes just for someone to talk to. That's my subject today. We need other people, and we need to be held accountable. We need support, we need counsel, and sometimes we just need someone to talk to.

MENTORING EACH OTHER

The scripture from Corinthians urges disciples to mentor each other. Paul says, "Through the gospel I became your father." For the sake of the gospel, be father or mother to others.

1 Corinthians 4

²⁰...the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power (action).

²¹What would you prefer? Shall I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

Paul refers to the case of the teacher and father mentioned in verse 15. You can learn self-discipline either way: Do you seek the tenderness of the father

or the authority of law? The mentor urges us on, but we can have the discipline we need either way.

Paul tells about his way. Paul wrote from prison, under severe hardship, saying, disciples you must be pastors to each other. Paul says people require much of their spiritual pastors, yet these pastors have equal right to require much of their people. The obligation is not all on one side; those who watch for our souls have a right not only to their own support, but to our reverence and confidence. He knew that those who despise their ecclesiastical rulers, will soon despise the Church of Christ itself, neglect its ordinances, and neglect their own salvation.

MENTOR AND MODEL

So he says we must be pastors to each other. We must provide for others because Christ provided for us. An artist needs something to draw. A photographer needs a scene to capture. And someone who is coming to our church in search of God is looking for someone to model and to copy.

A mentor is a brain to pick, an ear to listen and a nudge in the right direction.

**Maya Angelou said,
"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."**

Who makes you feel like your best self? Everybody seeks someone. And maybe for someone you are everybody.

II

Hebrews 10

Tradition teaches that Hebrews is the second most important of Paul's letters. It was either a letter he wrote, or a sermon he gave that was transcribed by Luke.

Here's a second scripture about Christian relationships.

Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,
²⁰by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,

²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

²³Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

²⁵Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

LET US (ALONE)

The five "Let us" verses tell all we need to know about support and perseverance in challenging times. There were no more challenging times than the days following the discovery that the disciples needed to carry on without the presence of their Lord, Jesus Christ. So this scripture pointed them toward hope in difficult times.

- 1. Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart, and a clear conscience.**
- 2. Let us hold unswervingly to hope.** Our hope is that if we can survive the dark nights of doubt, that the morning of faith will come again, as it always does, and it will be glorious.
- 3. Let us spur on another on to love and good deeds.** That is the mission statement of our church. Not to jeer about defects, troubles and shortcomings, but to spur one another on to love and good deeds. Before you utter a word of condemnation of anyone, remember that it is our job to spur one another on, not to find joy in someone else's sufferings.
- 4. Let us not give up meeting together.** We have all been tested and wonder if we want to continue to meet together, here in Santa Rosa as

much as anywhere. We discussed whether or not there is "brand loyalty" among Presbyterians at our coffee on Friday. Several have suggested that we live in a boutique society, where people will switch brands at the drop of a hat. But I came away from that discussion encouraged by the high brand loyalty that was expressed. If we know we can count on each other in the long run, or when we encounter moments of tension, then we can build a future.

The disciples faced the same fight or flight response. But we are here today because some of them agreed to continue meeting together because the work of Christ depends upon our ability to live together, to heal a world that needs us to work together.

- 5. And let us encourage each other.** Always encourage each other. It's not easy to sit by a person who is facing a devastating diagnosis, it's not easy to hear the lament of a person who feels that he/she has been marginalized, stomped on, or not taken seriously, it's tough to discover creative financial solutions with people who have been devastated by the collapse of stocks and properties and the changing job markets of the last five years.

When life is most difficult, then we most need to support, to counsel, and to talk with each other. Why? Because of our faith. Good sermon, Paul.

I STILL KNOW

Here's a good example of support and counsel.

It was a busy morning, about 8:30, when an elderly gentleman in his 80's arrived to have stitches removed from his thumb. He said he was in a hurry as he had an appointment at 9:00 am. I took his vital signs and had him take a seat, knowing it would be over an hour before someone would be able to see him.

I saw him looking at his watch and decided, since I was not busy with another patient, I would evaluate his wound. On

exam, his thumb was well healed, so I talked to one of the doctors, and got the needed supplies to remove his sutures and redress his wound.

While taking care of his wound, I asked him if he had another doctor's appointment since he was in such a hurry.

The gentleman told me no, that he needed to go to the nursing home to eat breakfast with his wife. I inquired as to her health. He told me that she had been there for a while and that she was a victim of Alzheimer's disease. As we talked, I asked if she would be upset if he was a bit late. He replied that she no longer knew who he was, that she had not recognized him in five years now.

I was surprised, and asked him, 'And you still go every morning, even though she doesn't know who you are?' He smiled as he patted my hand and said, 'She doesn't know me, **but I still know who she is.**'

Support, counsel, and someone to talk to. And if I had to pick just one, it would be someone to talk to, someone who still knows who I am even when I have forgotten.

Wouldn't it be great to be a church filled with people like that!

The happiest people don't necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the best of everything they have.

Everybody needs someone. And maybe for someone you are "everybody."



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