

Currency of Connection

2020-09-20 by Ben Deaver at Tallgrass Church on Acts 3:1-10

Baby Celebration

- Archer Wayne Johnson, born on May 12, 2020 to Nick and Lizy.
- Annelyse Marie Geldart, born on June 22, 2020 to Dave and Jenn.
- Archie and Annie need connection. They need community. Foundational to the way they have been shaped and crafted by God Himself is that they are not to go through life isolated and alone.
- **Genesis 2:18** Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."
- The only thing that wasn't good in creation was the isolation of Adam.
- God's provision of a wife for Adam is just the beginning of the relational web of connection that God weaves to cover the globe.
- The beautiful relational web that God began to weave was torn by the relational rebellion of Adam and Eve.
- God has been working to reweave this relational web of connection ever since that first breach in connection between Him and humanity and between Adam and Eve.
- We want our church to be a relational web of connection built upon the foundation of Christ into which Annie and Archie and Daniel James Schmitz and Kane Lawrence Boeckman can be born into, where they can be nourished and connected to Christ and community to grow up to be the sons and daughters of the King that they were intended to be.

Let's pray!

Lifting burdens during pandemic

- We've been talking about lifting burdens this fall. We recognize that there's a heaviness to this pandemic that we all feel at different levels.
- Sometimes we are carrying burdens that we don't even realize we are carrying. I've had friends who've had panic attacks but on the surface have seemed to be the most chill person I've met. More was going on physiologically than they realized.
- A burden we want to help one another bear is ISOLATION. Isolation is a heavy burden that needs to be lifted.
- Sometimes we're forced into isolation like in a pandemic and we can't connect like we used to but more often than not isolation is what we do to ourselves. Isolation often feels like the thing we want when it's actually completely opposite of what we need and were designed for.
- **Proverbs 18:1** Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.
- Everything we do as a church is designed for connection, connection to Christ and community.
- Let's look at a story from the early church of a guy that was physically present and yet socially isolated, who needed connection to Christ and community. I'll give you the application questions at the beginning.

Application:

1. *What is a step you can take to connect yourself and another more with Christ?*
2. *What is a step you can take to connect yourself and another more meaningfully to our church community?*

Acts 3:1-3 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour (3pm). ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.

- This guy wants money. My guess is that he's given up hope on being healed and connected to God and community. But he's not given up hope on money making him happy!
- This lame man was physically present in the community yet still socially isolated.
- BTW, I think that occurs all the time, people can definitely be physically present and yet emotionally absent.
- The lame were not included in the community. He was known as that guy at the Beautiful Gate of the temple who was always begging for alms. The thought and rumors about this guy were probably something like, "Was it he or his parents whose sin made him this way."
- In this lame man's case he probably felt isolated by the community whereas some self-isolate because of their own internal issues.
- This man's lameness was just the surface issue. It was a physical manifestation of his deep spiritual need.

Acts 4:4-5 ⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." ⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

- He looked up from his Smartphone and made sustained eye contact with Peter and John.
- What was going on in this lame man's heart and mind when he made eye contact with Peter and John?
- No distractions, just presence.

Acts 4:6-8 ⁶ But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸ And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

The Currency of Connection

- Peter didn't have any silver or gold but he did have the currency of connection to Christ!
- He gave this man presence and power.
- Was there disappointment when the man heard that Peter had no money to give him?
- Think about the dad who gives his kid all the toys a kid could want but wasn't emotionally available. The dad is working so hard to provide material things but hasn't provided the one thing that's most needed—connection.
- Think about the husband who works so hard to provide his wife with the lifestyle he thinks she wants and maybe she thinks she wants too but doesn't provide the one thing that's most needed—connection.
- What we most need as humans is relational connection.

- Last November I preached a sermon called Tangible Jesus and talked about the human need for physical touch. It's kind of crazy to think about how important human touch really is and how little of it we can safely have in the middle of a pandemic.
- The Monkey Experiment
 - Psychologist Harry Harlow did an experiment in the 1950s that impressively exhibits the importance of physical contact. He put monkey babies in a cage and left them alone for a little while (without their parents or peers around). Once he took them out of the cage, he confronted them with two 'mothers' in order for them to decide between the two. Both 'mothers' were actually not monkeys, but objects. The first one was made of wire, and was holding a bottle of milk. The second one consisted of a soft and fluffy material, but no bottle of milk. Which one would the little baby monkeys choose? Would they choose the milk-carrying mother – essential for their survival – or the cuddly fluffy mother?
 - To Harlow's amazement, the majority of the monkey babies chose the fluffy mother. Apparently, the cuddly feeling of body contact and closeness was more important to them than being fed with milk.
 - We are similar to monkeys in these hunger for physical connection. Several similar, but less drastic, experiments with humans all pointed to a similar outcome. Humans suffer from social isolation but react positively to physical contact.
- He hadn't risen up to give someone a hug...ever.
 - Jonalu story
- Emotional availability and connection can happen for anyone, even those who don't know Christ. But connection to the power of Christ ultimately what people need, what people were created for.
- Peter reached out and grabbed him by the hand and helped him to his feet.
- This isn't a teaching on the mechanics of healing prayer. This is a teaching on the currency of the Gospel.
- Not everyone is healed of their physical issues. In fact, perhaps most people aren't healed of their physical problems. Paul asked over and over again for the thorn in his flesh to be removed and it never was.
- We should pray over people for healing of their physical problems.
- And yet the profound thing about what Peter gave this man was not the ability to physically walk as much as the ability to walk *with* Jesus.
- When his feet and ankles were made strong they were made strong for a purpose, to walk and leap and praise God. He was made strong to connect with God!

Acts 4:9-10 ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

- Peter possessed the currency of connection to Christ AND to community!
- He was made strong to connect with his community.
- Now we do have some silver and gold to offer as a church. It's called the Neighboring Fund, and we're excited to use that for all sorts of needs that arise. However, we have something worth so much more than what's in that Neighboring Fund, we have the currency of connection to Christ and community!

We freely offer the currency of connection to Christ and community!

Application:

- Connect yourself and others to Christ.
- Connect yourself and others to church community.
- These are the same things as love God and love your neighbor as yourself.

1. Connect yourself and others to Christ.

The currency of connection is funded by the death of Christ!

Acts 3:11-16 ¹¹ While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them... ¹² And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or own righteousness we have made him walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶ And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

- Let’s make this clear. Let’s get real specific. This man was healed not just by whatever higher power you may happen to believe in but the Creator God...the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The one we read about in this book. The one who glorified His Son, Jesus Christ!
- The currency of connection is an infinitely renewable resource.
- There’s a limitless supply of relational connectivity flowing from the foot of the cross.
- Your greatest need is to be connected to Jesus.

Baptism Celebration—We have a Baptism Celebration coming up in a week and a half on Wednesday, September 30th at Pott Lake No. 2 where Summer Renberg will publicly share her faith in Christ. If there is anyone else who has been connected to Christ and would like to share that with others please let me know.

Soul Care Meeting—I was meeting with someone this week and after a two-hour conversation we came down to the simple step of journaling, putting pen to paper in an effort to connect with Christ. Sometimes the next step is just so simple and yet difficult.

What is one step you can take to connect more meaningfully with Christ?

Who has God put in your life that you can help connect to Christ?

2. Connect yourself and others to church community.

This currency of connection came out of church community!

Right before the story of this lame man's healing is the description of the early church community.

Acts 2:42-47 ⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

What is one step you can take to connect more meaningfully with church community?

Who has God put in your life that you can help connect to church community?

Hebrews 10:24-25 ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Resources—We've been trying to develop simple resources to help with connection:

- 21 Days of Prayer & Fasting guide
- Directory
- 50 Neighboring Ideas

Technology—We've been wrestling with how to use technology to help people be connected and feel connected while getting in person gatherings going again.

- The first Tuesday night guys and women's groups went great but Zoom didn't work well at all. Maybe we need to get a Zoom only group going?!
- GroupMe, Facebook, Marco Polo, Texting, Instagram, old-school phone call, etc.

In Person Gatherings

- Park Parties—Our first couple Wednesday night Park Parties have been really fun and filled with great conversation and connection for kids but sparsely attended. Maybe we need to find a different time or maybe it's exactly what it should be at this point.

Creative Ideas—Blessing Bags idea from Stephanie Chitwood—Dave Geldart has the first Blessing Bags story to share.

- Timely, meaningful text or phone call or Marco Polo.
- Pray for and with someone.
- Craft a question.

What is one step you can take to connect more meaningfully with church community?

Who has God put in your life that you can help connect to church community?

3. Continue to pray. Pray that God would lead us to be a connecting church.

Discouragement

- If you've been tracking with Tallgrass recently and with me personally you probably know that I've been somewhat if not greatly discouraged since early July. I've had a desperation to hear from God personally and for our community.
- It seems that every time I picked up the phone this week I was hearing bad news of a broken marriage, a failing faith, or a stubborn heart. I've become increasingly aware of the spiritual battle that is raging all around me, all around us, all around Tallgrass Church. There's so much more going on than meets the eye.
- And yet there have been several moments this past week both alone and with others that I have felt deeply connected to Christ and community.
 - Tuesday night Guys Group at Swansons
 - Thursday afternoon Big Staff Meeting
 - Reflecting on my Pure Desire homework about identifying with Mephibosheth, the lame kid who King David invited to his table of extravagance for the rest of his life in 2 Samuel 9.
 - Specific encouragements from some of you all.

Elder Retreat

- We have an Elder Retreat this next Tuesday through Thursday. We scheduled our 21 Days of Prayer & Fasting to lead right into this Elder Retreat. I thought that I wouldn't be connecting with Christ in this way until that Elder Retreat but now I'm personally headed into that time with more anticipation for God to show up and speak than I've had in a long time.
- I've invited several men and women who are invested in Tallgrass Church to intentionally pray three times this next week. I invite you to pray for our Elder Retreat as well.
- Pray for our Elder Retreat three times this week! All you need to do is set your alarm or Google Calendar and pray. I'll send these details out on GroupMe:
 - Pray at noon on Tuesday 9/22 over the first day of our Elder Retreat. Pray against any spiritual attack to disrupt our relationships with one another. Pray for unity of heart and mind and vision.
 - Pray at 9am on Wednesday 9/23 for a sense of hope and vision from God for Tallgrass Church.
 - Pray at 9am on Thursday 9/24, that we'd come out of this time with clear and specific action steps from our time together.

Will you commit to pray three times this week for our Elder Retreat?

Pray