

THRIVE LESSON

Challenged for Connection

Connection is making an intentional decision to let God, others and ourselves be known and seen under the context of truth. It doesn't mean people need to know every detail of our inner life, it simply means we live authentically. Living connected also means we are recipients and givers of relational resources. Our "real" selves house a surplus/supply of resources that will nourish those around us, and vice versa (the body of Christ). When we hide, we cut ourselves from connection in order to self-preserve – but we starve ourselves from the very nutrients necessary to change, heal, grow and live. We also starve those around us who were intended to be fed by something we ourselves possessed. There are many reasons for our entanglements in human relationships, but all of them have to do with the connection principles we will continue to learn in this process.

Connection is a choice, and it's a vulnerable choice. Some relationships don't warrant safe connection, and those are not the place to begin. Rather, connection must first always be directed towards our relationship with Jesus. Disconnection can become a tempting lifestyle that is hard to leave. It can leave us miserable on one hand, but contain false security on the other. All the while, the seed of our destiny is pre-written by God, as His workmanship created in advanced to perform a purpose and plan ordained by Him (Ephesians 2:10). In our protection, that precious seed lies in dormant desert ground waiting, and waiting, and waiting. It scours for the right opportunity where safe conditions will make it viable to take root and produce life. But that safety never arrives but through a leap of faith where we are willing to leave the comfort of protection, and enter into the dynamic, supernatural power of grace.

Connection Happens When:

1. Our connection is restored to God so we have the resources to live the life as He designed. This is always the starting point. This is where the seed of our design can be transformed into a living, growing, fruit-producing life.
2. Our connection can be restored to ourselves – where we can rise above the darkness of shame, guilt and fear and learn to walk out our calling. Where we can have freedom and live under the God-given privilege to be God's child above anything this world has labeled or said. Simply belonging to God is the best and most awesome calling we will ever be offered.
3. We begin to connect in our relationships – we need tools and skills to make this occur. We need to learn how to bring communication and boundary skills to relationships so we can connect, but create a method of safety at the same time.

Lack of Authentic Connection

Since we were designed for connection, when it is missing at a core level, we will by default replace it with something or someone. It may be drugs, sex, gambling, food, relationships, work, busyness or any other number of heart conditions. When we live disconnected, we can also focus on creating an artificial turf that makes our life appear externally to be thriving, when inside we are actually dying.

Since we are designed for connection, it is far more beneficial to spend time understanding why we disconnected, where we disconnected and how we can get connection principles restored then to beat ourselves over the head with wrongful choices. God's assessment tools simply seek to realign us to truth, not scorn us with where we have been. Essentially God hovers over that "seed" (our life) and waits for that Divine moment when we come into agreement with Him that His idea for us is better than our coping mechanisms. It's the breaking point when we leave the seed of our self will, self protection and self effort and choose to cling to Him as the source of nourishment and

strength. Despite the risk involved, it is only in that transaction where we have the opportunity to become all God intended.

If Connection is Key, Why Don't We Connect?

The simple truth is we don't release ourselves to God's hand because we are scared to trust Him, or don't understand His character. Fear often drives our lives, which is why we end up in self protection in the first place. By nature, we are programmed to self protect and satisfy our own needs. This is our called our flesh. But when we have deeper heart injuries, violations and areas of weakness, this battle intensifies. The hurt in our hearts from authority figures and from neglected needs must be validated at some point to be properly healed. We will pursue that at a later time.

The enemy also has a role. He seeks to sabotage and destroy our potential. The devil doesn't just want "bad things" to happen to us, He wants to keep us from our God-given destiny (John 10:10). The battle that we all face is real, and what we choose determines the outcome.

Seeds of Truth

[23] Jesus (to Philip and Andrew): The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. [24] I tell you the truth: unless a grain of wheat is planted in the ground and dies, it remains a solitary seed. But when it is planted, it produces in death a great harvest. [25] The one who loves this life will lose it, and the one who despises it in this world will have life forevermore. [26] Anyone who serves Me must follow My path; anyone who serves Me will want to be where I am, and he will be honored by the Father. - John 12:23-26 Voice

[5] I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you abide in Me and I in you, you will bear great fruit. Without Me, you will accomplish nothing. [6] If anyone does not abide in Me, he is like a branch that is tossed out and shrivels up and is later gathered to be tossed into the fire to burn. [7] If you abide in Me and My voice abides in you, anything you ask will come to pass for you. [8] Your abundant growth and your faithfulness as My followers will bring glory to the Father. - John 15:5-8 Voice

A Prayer:

Father God,

I want to learn to be connected first with you, and also with my authentic self. I'm not sure where to begin and don't even understand the inner workings of my heart. I do desire to become, not simply to know. And I do want relationship to be more important than merely trying to get by. It's messy, but make me ready. Help me to plug into you, your ideas for my life and make your Word come alive inside.

In Jesus' name- Amen

Discussion:

1. Do you want more connection?
2. Talk about your experience with disconnection
3. Do you recognize shame? (A nature by-product of disconnection)
4. Name a connection goal in your life.