

## **Known: Kingdom Connectors**

To know and be known are two of our deepest needs as relational beings. We were made for life-giving relationships and fellowship with one another. We are *better together*, and that's the way God intended it!

J. I. Packer describes fellowship as a mutual sharing where give and take is commonplace. He also asserts that folks who are not in fellowship with the Father are in no place to share the realities of fellowship with others. It's important to understand the vertical nature of fellowship (with God) before we can effectively engage in the horizontal nature of fellowship (with others).

This week we will discover more about the horizontal nature of our divine purpose and calling...into community and fellowship with others. We are truly better together. We were made for kingdom connections.

1 Peter 2:4-5 says, "*As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*"

The apostle Peter addresses the vertical relationship with God first, "*the living stone,*" and moves onto its horizontal implications second, "*you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.*"

Our fellowship flows out of our collective relationship with God through Christ. Our spiritual "houses," or local churches, are sacred gatherings where we, *the living stones*, are being built up and put together with divine intention and direction.

## **Built by the Master, Jesus**

Matthew 16:18 - And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

Here, Christ so states, for the first time, "*I will build my church.*" *Ekklesia* - "church." - called out from/out of and properly means; "people called out from the world and to God, the outcome being the Church (the mystical body of Christ) – i.e. the universal (total) body of believers whom God calls out from the world and into His eternal kingdom."

Christ is building His church with all the people called out of the world and into faith.

-Peter knew we were being called to something bigger than ourselves.

-Peter knew the master builder was working on something special, something that would change the world.

-Peter knew the people of God were being built up together into a spiritual house...The church... and not even the very gates of hell would overcome her.

## **Trusting God**

John 20 - Thomas has missed the resurrected Jesus as He appeared to the other disciples. So instead of believing the accounts of others, Thomas says; *"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."*

Later, Jesus appears again to the disciples, and this time Thomas is with them. Jesus enters a locked room and says to Thomas, *"Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."*

Then Jesus said, *"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

By faith we trust Jesus is building His church. By faith we trust He's using all of us in the process. For better or worse, He's using us...and here's the kicker... Using us, building us up *together*, that's the plan. That's the process.

## **Trusting Others**

We all have ample reason to be suspicious of other people. Many folks in the world today would rather live life on their own than risk further pain and suffering in a relationship. Yet, we were made for more.

We were built to thrive in fellowship with others. And yet the world tells us all the time that the best way to live is only for ourselves. Cutting yourself off from others is the safe way to live, the simple way to live, the worldly way to live.

But it's not the Jesus way to live.

The most common thing we share together is Christ. He is the uniting factor in all of what we do here today and He's the one that unites us as we share a relationship with one another.

If give and take is the essence of fellowship, then today is a good day for there to be an opportunity for exchange to take place. Some of you need to extend forgiveness and some of you need to receive forgiveness. Some of you need to give yourself in service and ministry and some of you need to receive the service and ministry of others. What can you do...today... to restore fellowship and relationship with those around you? What can you do to connect or reconnect with a brother or sister in Christ?

What would it look like this week to spend more time fostering relationships and kingdom connections? It's what you and I were made for, it's the plan of the Master Builder.

So, trust Him, and trust the community He has you in. Trust the community here at Bethel.