

One of the main truths I want to share with the students this week is that the quality of the people around us and the unity we share in Christ are what should drive our pursuit of relationships more than anything else. Along with that, I want them to know that it is absolutely okay—and even good—to have deep, meaningful, and significant relationships that last only for a short time. Even when we know we won't be around the same people a year from now, we are still called to invest in them.

We see this modeled clearly in the life of Paul. It was unusual for him to stay in one place for very long. During his missionary journeys, the longest he remained in a single city was Ephesus, where he stayed for about three years (Acts 20:31). That's less than half the time our students have with us in the youth program. Most of Paul's visits were anywhere between two weeks and two years, yet during those short windows he formed deep, meaningful relationships—even though he knew he would eventually have to say goodbye.

Not long ago I was reading an old journal entry from shortly after I returned from China. I wrote that I had poured my whole heart into the people around me during those two years, and because of that, not all of my heart was able to come back to America with me. That is one of the difficult tragedies of life: if we love well, we will have our hearts broken. But as believers, we also have the promise that God Himself indwells us—ministering to us, healing us, restoring our souls.

It reminds me of the Japanese art of *kintsugi*. In kintsugi, pottery is intentionally broken and then repaired with gold, creating something more beautiful and more valuable than it was before its breaking. That is what God does in us when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, to love deeply, and to invest wholeheartedly in others.

Our hearts will not remain fully intact in this life. But it is far better to sow our hearts for the sake of others, to invest in fellow believers, and to labor for the spread of the gospel, than to passively and inevitably let our hearts crack in isolation. God is the one who makes the broken whole and new.