

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday September 27, 2020. "Relationships: Doing Better at Being Together. Collaboration."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to watch the live stream service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

We're still gathering in person. A small but dedicated group who follow all the guidelines and were so encouraging with your love and presence gathered with us. If you're still joining us online we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Recap.

Well, we finished our relationship series Sunday. We recognize that out of all the things we will struggle with, and often don't know how to fix them when they're broken, relationships with others are a difficult challenge...for ALL of us. We want our relationships with others to be rich and deep and meaningful, and we know for those to happen it requires hard work. So, we've hit three different topics over the past four weeks. The first was compassion, and how to grow our ability to relate to people who are not like us. The second Sunday we talked about communication, and the pitfalls we often fall into because of how difficult honest and clear conversation can be with the important people in our lives. Last week we talked about conflict, how it happens, and the goal in working to resolving it is always towards forgiveness. And that is either found in reconciling the relationship, or working towards some form of separating and letting go of the hurt and pain. All of these can be found online.

III Sunday.

This Sunday we wrapped up the series with a study of this thing called collaboration. Our society is fascinated, obsessed, and driven by collaboration's opposite...and that is competition. Now first, we want to say we are not anti-competition. We love sports, an ethic that encourages businesses to be focused on providing quality products, and an environment that inspires everyone to be their best. However, no matter how good a value competition can be, there is always a darker, unhealthy side of it. And competition that works to isolate, oppress, exclude, and turns us into selfish uncaring people who only look out for themselves, is so destructive...especially in our relationships.

So, before we dive into the specific passage for today, let's wrestle with some questions about competition vs. collaboration.

How would you define competition and collaboration?

What are the benefits and weaknesses of each?

Do you lean towards one in particular, and how do you experience it?

The scripture for this Sunday is a powerful one that addresses the internal state, the spiritual life and maturity of someone who practices this sacred truth that is at the heart of collaboration. So, read **Philippians 2:1-8** and we'll talk about it. One suggestion. Read it one verse at a time, slowly, and spend a few moments contemplating on each one of the elements of this passage.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What specific teachings could you connect with the idea of collaboration?

And the big one; how does it speak into our understanding of rights and privileges?

How might that clash with the values of our society?

So then Kal talked about all of the benefits of relationships built on an active bent towards collaboration. But the bottom line is- a collaborative spirit and heart versus a competitive one, that puts our wants and needs first, is the cornerstone of all of our relationships.

So, let's look at what this passage in Philippians said are the roots of collaboration.

C. What leads, (knowing and doing), to great collaboration in relationships.

Paul described this attitude and life as; "*Being in a community of spirit*" **working in the same direction for the same thing**. This demands the internal work developing spirit, attitude, relationship ethic, that is "FOR" the other person, and "FOR" the relationship, rather than trying to win, keep score, get the upper hand, which is the driving force behind competition.

1. Taking the position of a low place, deference.

Bottom line is Jesus taught this...and modeled it. "*Gave up rights and privileges*" In the U.S. we have a "*bill of rights*", and in a relationship with Jesus we have a "*bill of responsibilities*". Not what we deserve, but there is this life of being a servant that Jesus practiced and calls us towards. There will be a conflict between these two because the world and a life following Jesus are at odds with each other. When you internally wrestle between your rights, (competition), and your responsibilities, (collaboration), we have to choose wisely, and spiritually.

How are you holding your own wants and needs?

2. Growing trust.

Trust is the fuel that powers relationships. A spirit of collaboration grows trust between people. Knowing the other person is not just out for their own gain, will allow you to trust them. Because you build relationships, work in a collaborative/cooperative environment, when there is a **lack of information, you will fill that gap with trust**. Trust is the belief the other person will not take advantage of the situation, relationship, you, for their own gain. If you know the other person is for you, any group you belong to, they will almost always be more willing to commit to collaborate.

3. Growing respect.

Respect is the cornerstone, foundation, of any relationship. Giving respect, and feeling respected, allows you to know you're being heard, and will allow you to be more collaborative and not so competitive. Respect helps you value people as children of God. The division in our society stems from isolating ourselves into sameness bubbles. When we operate out of a scarcity/competitive

mindset, we don't respect people who aren't like us, because we won't see them as human. They are the other. We believe we're in competition with them, rather than working to collaborate with them. Because we believe we have to play the "**Survivor**" game; "**Outwit. Outplay. Outlast**" to get ours, then we don't see them as one of us, and we won't respect them. When we allow ourselves to be motivated by respect we'll want to work together, which will grow even more respect for each other.

4. Helping each other identify what we're good at.

Collaboration helps you to realize giftedness, and skills, that allows any relationship to get into a comfortable, almost without thinking, way to operate. True collaboration moves people into places to best use their abilities. Jesus sent out his disciples before they were ready, fully capable, to do his work. This helped them identify what they were good at and enabled them to grow. Collaboration will come from NOT holding on to your power and control, but letting go of it, and growing others.

5. Open and honest communication.

In a collaborative environment, everyone works in the same direction. So you can say the hard and true things, with an abundance of grace. In a spirit of collaboration, each person in the relationship, or group, knows everyone is working in the same direction, for the same thing, can be an honest flow of communication, because you know it's not about you, but the greater goal/good. Again a scarcity, fear mindset, (curses to those who abuse both of those), creates a competitive mindset, and rewards lies and falsehoods. But a culture built on collaboration, knowing there's enough, we're all working together, we can say the hard things, because they'll be true, and it's not going to benefit them.

6. Appreciating diversity.

Collaboration doesn't require forced conformity or uniformity. Collaboration isn't afraid of difference. Collaboration doesn't judge, rank, or assign value or worth. It embraces and celebrates the divine uniqueness in each and all of us, to add to the common purpose everyone is working towards.

III Challenge.

This was our final issue concerning the relationships in our life. One of the most difficult, but so impacting to all of our relationships and the world...if we can do this well. It begins with doing like Jesus did, and giving up our internal push for our perceived rights and privileges. And actively working towards the greater good through collaboration we can change the world. This is so difficult because the world does not encourage, reward those who live selflessly and sacrificially. It rewards those who elbow and push their way to the front. That's why we see the division and strife we do in the world. So, in all of the relationships in our life, we have the privilege and great opportunity, to practice these four elements of healthy relationships. To grow our ability to show and practice compassion to everyone in our life. Those we are close to and those that are in the outer circles of our world. To grow our effectiveness in communication and dealing with conflict in constructive and life-giving ways. And lastly, to learn to operate and treat others in a more collaborative way rather than a competitive way. Relationships matter. And our ability to do all we can to get better at them matters. Do the work, and you will be so glad you did.

How can you in one or two ways do some of this work on your relationships this week?