

1. We began a series several weeks ago called "Better Together". Based on Ecclesiastes chapter 4.
2. King Solomon reminded us that we are better together because our efforts are multiplied.
3. Together we are in a place to lift one another up when we stumble or fall.
4. Our health and wellbeing is preserved because we can protect one another. We can keep warm together.
5. And then finally, together we can withstand attacks and dangers to our lives.
6. So, we concluded that without a doubt, as believers in Jesus Christ, we need other believers. We need to do life together with them.
7. We will be better Christ followers, and they will be better Christ followers if we live for Christ together.
8. So that lead us to a question. "What is together." Together is not just being in the same geographical location.
9. Together is not just stopping with the truth that you are a believer and I am a believer; now isn't it great that we have that in common.
10. Believers in Jesus Christ, doing life together, come together as they become family.
11. Genesis 2:24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.
12. Being family involves being unified. Becoming one with other believers.
13. This leaving and cleaving principle doesn't mean that we disown everyone else in our lives to become one with other believers. I believe in our modern-day world that is what we would call a cult.
14. Becoming one by leaving and cleaving involves recognizing that our biological families, though wonderful and good and necessary, are not enough. There is something more that God offers us and that is to become one with other believers. A new family. By blood (Jesus), and birth (salvation), we are born into a new family. The family of God.
15. Then we ended last time with this truth. We become family when we face one another.

16. Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
17. What the writer tells the Hebrews is that we need to spur, which is another way of saying motivate, and we need to encourage one another.
18. We need to cheer one another on. We become intimate, and one, and unified as we build one another up.
19. But here's the thing. Being intimate doesn't happen by looking at the back of someone's head. Being intimate is something that only occurs face to face.
20. I asked Maryletha to come on stage and illustrate this point.
21. With her back toward me I spoke encouraging words to her. It didn't mean very much. But when she turned around and faced me, even though I spoke almost the exact same words, she physically responded. You could tell by her body language that it was having an affect on her.
22. You have never seen a TV show or a movie where a couple expressed deep, emotional feelings for one another while looking at the back of each other's head. They always connect deeply when they are facing one another.
23. Our application was this. While it is wonderful and good for us to come together on Sunday mornings to worship, and praise and pray. It is not enough. Because the vast majority of the time we are looking at the back of someone else's head.
24. In order for intimacy to occur. In order for unity to occur. In order for closeness, and connection, and oneness to occur, we must be face to face.
25. Which is exactly why we believe and encourage every single believer to be a part of a small group.
26. Good things can happen in your life on Sunday mornings. But really good things will happen in your life as you commit to coming together with a small group of believers, face to face, eye to eye, becoming one. Becoming family.

27. So, if you will. now that we have laid the groundwork. Allow me to add one more element to this idea of what together really is.

TEXT: **Hebrews 10:24-25** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

TITLE: **Speaking life.**

INTRO:

1. As we said, this passage commands us to spur, motivate, and encourage one another.
2. Now. I am going to purposefully talk about one single area today. Just so you know, we could spend hours and hours talking about all the ways that we spur one another on, and motivate one another and encourage one another.
3. But I believe the Lord would have me to focus what that looks like by zeroing in on one phrase. And that is this.
4. We spur, and motivate, and encourage, as we speak into each other's life.
5. Now. Two absolutely vital elements of small groups is that they be bible based, and that there is some type of study that is designed to benefit and help the members of that small group.
6. So, there is the word of God, and then there is instruction on how to apply the word or truth to our lives.
7. But to become one. To become unified. To become family. What is needed is much more and a whole lot deeper than just the passing on of information, and the application of truth. What is needed is in the context of that truth, people are speaking into one another's lives.
8. What do we mean by that? It means that people are entering into relationship with other believers. And that relationship has some very specific characteristics.
9. People are allowing themselves to be known. They are opening up their heart. They are giving permission for others in that group to speak into them and to love them.

10. And then on the reverse side. Each person in the group commits to listen to others so they can know them and hear their heart, and speak loving words into the life of their brother or sister in Christ.
11. That is the overview of what it means to speak into the life of other believers.
12. In just a moment we are going to dig a little deeper into what that looks like. But before we do, I want to share with you why it is so important to settle for nothing less than this type of relationship with other believers.
13. Why it is so vital for you to speak into the lives of others, and for others to speak into your life? Because **if we don't seek for this type of relationship** to occur in our walk with other believers, **our growth is stunted**. We will live ineffective lives. And often times we will stay bound in the same cycles of dysfunction.
14. Right out of high school, I was given the opportunity to learn a trade. As you know I didn't continue in that, but I feel so blessed by that experience because I have used what I learned so many times over the years that I can't imagine my life without it.
15. I was accepted into a bricklayer's apprenticeship program. An employer agreed to sponsor me. Send me to school. Train me. And pay me a little something all the while I was learning.
16. This program was 3 ½ years long. It was hard. It was frustrating. I wanted to quit so many times I lost count. But this program helped shape who I am today.
17. A few hours a week we would learn in the classroom, but each day we would get hands on experience working around journeyman bricklayers on real construction sites, building real buildings.
18. This hands-on experience consisted of working along side and with these journeyman bricklayers. And they knew they were not only building a building; it was their job to build a young bricklayer.
19. They would help. They would evaluate my work. They would give me pointers. They would tell me when I messed up. How I messed up. And how to do it differently so I didn't keep making the same mistakes.

20. Every journeyman bricklayer on the job, often dozens of them on one single jobsite, had the right to speak into my craft. They didn't ask if they could. They just did it.
21. Now. I hated that for the longest time. I am a perfectionist. I want things to be perfect. And I wasn't going to be laying any bricks or blocks perfectly for a very long time.
22. It was slow. I was in the dark a lot. For me it was a painful experience. But it was necessary. If I didn't allow that to happen in my life, I was going to be the loser.
23. One day after a few months, I was assigned to a new job, and on that job, I met another apprentice bricklayer. His name was Joey. (not his real name)
24. I noticed pretty quickly that he didn't seem to be much more skilled than I was, so that first afternoon I asked him. How many months have you been an apprentice?
25. He was offended. He bowed up and said, I have been an apprentice for over 3 years. I will be a journeyman in about 4 months.
26. I kept my mouth shut until I got home that night and I asked my dad. Tell me about Joey.
27. My dad said that basically, Joey was unwilling to learn.
28. Joey was a loud talker. Always saying something, but never really listening.
29. From the first day he started, the journeyman would try to help him and teach him and show him how to improve, but from day one he wouldn't have any of it.
30. He thought he knew it all. He acted like he didn't need any advice or help from anybody. He was going to do it his way and he didn't want to hear from anyone else.
31. So, what happened was over a period of about 6 months. Joey would shut out all the helpful advice from the guys on this job. They would move him to another job, and he would shut them all out.
32. And after a while he had worked with just about every guy in the company, and just about every guy had decided they weren't going to try to help him anymore. And they didn't.

33. And the result was that a guy who should have been really skilled, wasn't very skilled at all. He couldn't be trusted to do a good job. So, his career and his abilities stalled.
34. What was worse, the company we worked for was known to treat the people who had come through their apprenticeship program really well.
35. They promoted them faster. They trained them further so they could be foremans, and run their own jobs. And as a result, make a lot more money.
36. But Joey was stuck at the level of a 6-month apprentice, all because he wouldn't let anybody speak into him and help him.
37. You say well what does that have to do with being a follower of Jesus Christ?
38. I believe it has everything to do with being a follower of Jesus Christ. Because when we accept Jesus as savior, we are green. We need to grow. And **the only way we grow is with the help of loving people who will invest in our lives.**
39. And even after we have served the Lord for lots of years, we still don't know it all. We still have blind spots. We still need help.
40. For me, the more I grow in my relationship with Jesus, the more I realize I need to grow more.
41. But if I am not careful; and just to be clear, this can happen to pastors just as easily as it can happen to anyone else, I can isolate myself and insulate myself so that nobody really knows me. And since nobody really knows me, nobody can really help me with the faults and failures that are a part of my life.
42. And I don't think I am a Joey, any more than I think you are a Joey. For the most part I don't think it is arrogance that keeps us from opening up and connecting with other believers so deeply that they can speak into my life and I can speak into theirs.
43. I think the issue is pain. It is not easy to open up like that. It is painful. It makes you vulnerable. Not things I like to experience on a regular basis. But yet necessary for my growth and your growth.

44. But it doesn't change the reality. I need to be spoken into, and I need to speak into others.
45. So, what does that look like? Very quickly. It involves teaching, admonishing, and restoring.

Teaching.

1. Colossians 3:16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.
2. For the sake of time I am going to really simplify these thoughts.
3. I would sum up the idea of teaching this way.
 - I don't know how to do it.
 - You know how to do it.
 - I need you to show me how to do it.
 - You need to show me how to do it.
4. That is teaching in a nutshell. But if any one of those four things don't happen, the learning goes off the rails and crashes.
5. If I act like I know how to do it when I really don't; I won't learn.
6. If you know how to do it but you are unwilling to teach me; I won't learn.
7. If I need you to show me, but I won't let you show me; I won't learn.
8. And if you don't see the need to teach me; then I won't learn, and you won't learn because the teacher always learns more than the student.
9. So how does that apply to our walk with Jesus and with other believers.
10. There are things about life and serving God that I don't know, but you do.
11. There are things about life and serving God that you don't know, but I do.
12. So, if I will listen to you and you will listen to me, and if I will teach you and you will teach me, then together we will grow by leaps and bounds in our faith.
13. Ecclesiastes chapter 4. Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.

14. You and I need to be taught, and to teach. Without both of those elements in our lives, we stagnate, we stall in our growth, and we stay stuck in the same cycles of dysfunction.
15. But when we allow that kind of teaching in our lives from other believers, together we become much better Christ followers than we do on our own.

Admonishing

1. **Colossians 3:16** Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.
2. Now. Teaching is great. But teaching without some admonishing only goes so far.
3. I would define the act of admonishing this way.
4. I know what I should be doing, but I'm not doing it. So, I need someone to light a fire under me, or give me a kick in the backside so I will be motivated to do what I know I should be doing.
5. You know what you should be doing, but you are not doing it. So, what you need is for someone to light a fire under you, or give you a kick in the backside so you will be motivated to do what you know you should be doing.
6. That word admonish carries some weight. It is not a light term. It can also mean to correct someone sternly.
7. Again, that is a painful thought. I'm an adult. I don't really want someone admonishing me. But the truth is we all need admonishing from time to time.
8. We need someone who can see that we are not living up to our potential, but yet at the same time cares enough about us to not let us stay there in that apathy indifference.
9. We need to be taught, and we need to teach.
10. We need to be admonished, and we need to admonish.
11. Then finally...

Restoring

1. Galatians 6:1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.
2. What I see there from that verse, is that all of us need a safe place to fail. We need a safe place where sinning (which we all do from time to time) is not deadly.
3. And what keeps our sin from being deadly is the word restore.
4. If someone is caught in sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore them gently.
5. People who restore things are people who are not quick to throw something away.
6. Maybe they see a couch, or table, or lamp, or a car, and it is nicked and bruised and tattered and torn. But rather than throwing that thing away, they restore it.
7. They bring it back to life. They work with it. They repair it. They touch it. They may sand or buff or any one of hundreds of things, all with the purpose of bringing that thing back into the place of beauty it was intended to have.
8. What a powerful picture of what all of us need as believers in Jesus Christ. We need an environment where when we fail and when we sin, the people around us are not looking to cut us off, they are looking to restore us and bring life and health back to our lives.
9. But here's the thing. We also need to be restorers. We need to be slow to cast people aside, and quick to pray, touch, lead, and repair whatever is broken. Somebody needs you just as much as you need them.

Conclusion:

1. And contrary to popular belief. Our biological family might not be the best ones to do that.
2. I believe it is our church family that is best equipped to restore and bring us back to right relationship.
3. To not just point out what is wrong, but to lead down the path to what is right.

4. You and I need that. **We need people to speak into our life.**
5. I was taking Kayllen, our daughter back to the airport when she came in for our Jeremy's wedding.
6. I asked her if the veteran actors in the theater where she serves, gave pointers, and helped the apprentice actors like her with direction and wisdom. And to my surprise she said no. They actually don't.
7. The direction comes from the director of the production. He or she tells everyone what they want them to do, and the actors know to do it.
8. But normally the director is only there early on, and then the director isn't around much once the performances start.
9. So I asked. What does that do to the dynamic between actors? And for sure, many of the actors are close to one another.
10. But each actor has a one-year contract, and no one is sure if at the end of that year they will still be working together or not so it's not unusual for relationships to be somewhat surface level.
11. And it's not unusual for the actors to kind of keep to themselves and not help one another become better, because it's just not done that way.
12. I understand that setting, and I am not being critical in the least.
13. But as believers we aren't on a one-year contract.
14. And if in a sense I am kind of like the director, let's be very clear up front, if you are only getting what I can give you, you are going to be a very weak Christian because I don't know it all and I haven't done and experienced it all.
15. But together we have collectively experienced almost everything and so that means there are many people who are much more qualified to speak into your life and help you with certain areas than I ever will be.
16. If you will put yourself in a position to let others in and not shut yourself off. And to reject that wonderful gift is to say...
17. Well, I don't need that in my walk with the Lord and in my attempt to live life?
18. I always know what to do.
19. I never lose motivation or courage?

20. I never fail. None of us would ever think such things much less say them.
21. And those are the very reasons why we need people in our life who can speak into us, and we need people we can speak into.
22. Because we are better together.
23. Pray.
24. Salvation call.
25. Acknowledge the need.
26. Commit to seek those kinds of relationships, through small groups and one on one.
27. Close.