**The Power of Connecting**

Ephesians 1:1-6, 15-23

As we start this new ***series on Connecting*** we saw last week that JESUS is the one who brings us together. His finished work on the cross is what unites us with God and with each other. Listen again to Hebrews 10:

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” Hebrews 10:23-25

It is the confession of our hope - **the gospel of Jesus Christ the Lord** - that we cling to. It is the faithfulness of God to keep His covenant and continue to work in us, growing us and purifying us until the day of Jesus Christ. Based on the grace of Jesus and knowing we are ONE in Him, we commit to meet together, to encourage one another, to stir up one another to love and good deeds. ALL THE MORE as we see the Day drawing near.

Today I want to share an overview of the concept of connecting. This comes from Larry Crabb’s classic book by that title, published in 1997. I vividly remember reading that book in college as I was experiencing exactly what he was talking about. I was seeing in myself and others both ***powerfully good impulses*** to serve Jesus with boldness and zeal, and ***terribly bad desires*** that still gained mastery over us from time to time.

But something really remarkable happened in our Bible studies and gatherings ***when one guy opened up to share his struggle*** and the other guys didn’t meet him with judgment and condemnation and send him away burdened by shame and failure. Rather, we lifted him up! We stood with him side by side saying we saw JESUS in Him - we saw hope for him. We saw good, even when there was bad all over him - we saw grace and helped the struggling one to see it too.

I hope you have experienced connecting like this. Probably you’ve been on both sides of it, as I have. Sometimes you’re the one needing to be lifted up. Sometimes you’re the one doing the lifting up. Let me share **Larry Crabb’s prophetic exhortation** to the church. After 25 years of professional Christian counseling Crabb wrote this book as a wake up call to the church. He argues that the vast majority of professional counseling would not be necessary if the church would just be the church.

Let’s walk through this powerful concept of connecting and ***apply it to ourselves as both the HELPERS and the HELPEES***. Someone comes to you with one of these issues:

**Presenting Problem:** addiction, anxiety, depression, anger, disrespect, over-eating, under-eating, over-working, under-working, pride, selfishness, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If you circle one or two of these no one will know if it’s for YOU or for that person you had to help. So go ahead. Let’s take **anger and disrespect** as our example today - as what often happens in a marriage. To just embrace the stereotype, the husband is sitting there feeling angry and disrespected. The wife is feeling sad and discouraged, unloved and unappreciated. This couple comes to YOU looking for hope and help. You immediately see the presenting problems. But what do you do?

**Treatment Options:**

1. Fix what’s **Wrong** through therapy to resolve psychological issues

It has become almost our knee-jerk reaction to send people to counseling. Now, to be clear - ***I am all for Christian counseling!*** Just as we all need to see a medical doctor from time to time, I believe all Christians can benefit from seeing a counselor from time to time. All marriages - even the good ones - can get better, and a skilled counselor can help you see and discuss issues you have not fully perceived or dealt with. So I’m not rejecting the need for all counseling and believe me, neither was Larry Crabb. He kept on counseling and teaching counseling and running counseling centers until his death just a couple of years ago.

But listen to Dr. Crabb here. Our diagnosis will always determine our treatment plan. If you see this couple in front of you and your immediate diagnosis is - ***“these people have ISSUES,”*** like deep psychological problems - you will send them to a psychological professional. We live in a day when everyone is a closet therapist, right? Dr. Phil and Oprah and countless self-help books have brought psychology into everyday talk. You’ve probably heard of Freud’s categories of the Id, Ego and Superego. You don’t remember what they stand for but you’re pretty sure they’re rattling around in there. (Relax, we are not delving into Freud today, PTL!)

Do you see the point here? If our **diagnosis** is - there is something psychologically WRONG, some childhood pain or trauma or unresolved issue that must be identified and worked through - we will always refer people out to professionals who are trained to deal with these things. It’s like if your friend came to you just constantly drinking - always drinking but still thirsty. One water bottle and Big Gulp after another. You’d hopefully think DIABETES and get the guy to a doctor right away. Hopefully you wouldn’t say, “Hey, I’ve got some insulin here, want me to jab this into you?”

If we diagnose every problem as a “disturbed inner child,” or “unresolved daddy issues” or some other mumbo jumbo do you see how that will keep us from even trying to help each other? One result:

**Treatment Options:**

1. Fix what’s **Wrong** through therapy to resolve psychological issues
   * The new priestly class of professional **Counselors**

We have created a new class of people: the professional therapist. For hundreds of years ***people went to their parish PRIEST*** and then to their local PASTOR for prayer and guidance and help and hope. The confessional was a place you could share your deepest sins and secrets. I’m not saying this was a good system, because it elevated the priest - and the reformers had to push for “the priesthood of all believers.” But we have fallen back into that same old trap just not with priests - but with COUNSELORS instead.

Think about it. (Don’t raise your hands!) How many of you ***would feel completely safe coming into my office*** to share your deepest, darkest secrets? The most common thing on the rare occasion that someone does come into my office is they say, “Uh oh, got called in to the principal…”

Now think about walking into ***the office of a professional counselor***. Would you feel safer there? Would you be more likely to be totally open and honest? I think my takeaway is that I need to start charging $150/ hour and then people will cut to the chase and just open right up.

Ok, so one reaction to a couple like this is to immediately send them to counseling to “fix what’s wrong” inside of them. “You people have issues!” You might think. The other common diagnosis is:

**Treatment Options:**

1. Do what’s **Right** through effort, exhortation and accountability

You might hear the couple in front of you and very quickly ***start dishing out advice***. **Husband**, you need to re-commit to date nights - every week, no matter what. Do you know her love languages? Start writing letters or buying gifts or spending the time. Oh, you’re addicted to porn? Yeah, that’s not good. You have to stop that right away. I’ll help you download covenant eyes, and we will start an accountability group for you.

**Wife**, how are you communicating with your husband? Are you being critical and complaining all the time? Are you trying to change his behavior with constant nagging? How is that working out for you? You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar!

Now, I am a huge fan of the ***Love and Respect*** material. If you’re having communication issues in your marriage, get on RightNow Media and go through the Crazy Cycle video series. If husbands will actively and intentionally love their wives, it is like oxygen to the soul of a woman. And if wives will respect and appreciate their husbands, the guys will respond and fill up and turn into the heroes we know they want to be.

But is that the end of the story? ***Is it just about BEHAVIOR?*** Is that the end of the story? Increased effort, exhortation and accountability? Does this couple just need a “take two of these Bible verses” prescription and call me in the morning?

**Treatment Options:**

1. Do what’s **Right** through effort, exhortation and accountability
   * Trading one expression of **Flesh** for another (from self-focus to self-reliance)

If the appeal is to **WILL POWER**, do you see the problem? Just do better. Come on man. White knuckle this thing and pull yourself up by your bootstraps, man up and just do it.

We are just ***converting prodigal sons into older brothers***. We are shifting them from self-focus to self-reliance, from selfishness to pride. And the devil laughs.

Larry Crabb pointed this out - that for most of us, these are the only two tools in our toolbox. ***Therapy or accountability***.

**Treatment Options:**

1. Fix what’s **Wrong** through therapy to resolve psychological issues
2. Do what’s **Right** through effort, exhortation and accountability

If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. I’d like to remove that screw for you but I don’t have the plus shape one, so I’ll just pound it in with my hammer, ok? It’s like all we have is ***the prybar of therapy or the hammer of accountability***. That’s it. Hard to build a house with just those two. And really hard to help people heal and move forward with just those two.

***Is there a better way?*** Dr. Crabb pointed us to the way in ‘97 and other leaders like Paul Tripp and David Powlison have been helping to clarify that more gospel-centered path ever since.

Now let’s zoom out to get a broad diagnosis on every human being everywhere. Hopefully this is not a revelation - that people are a mixed bag. Have you noticed?

**Baseline Diagnosis:**

1. There is **Good** in everyone because the **Image of God** is imprinted on us
2. There is **Bad** in everyone because the **Corruption** of Adam is embedded in us

Because all people are made in the image of God, there is good in us. We all have ***a moral conscience*** that knows right and wrong. Everyone has an awareness that God exists, and that knowledge is what gives us a moral compass. And, most importantly, all people are wired for relationship.

However, we don’t live in the Garden of Eden anymore. I expect that’s not shocking news. This world is very broken and the people in it are quite messed up. You and me included. Since Adam and Eve fell into sin, the world fell into corruption and brokenness.

1. There is **Good** in everyone because the **Image of God** is imprinted on us
   * This makes us rational, relational and moral beings who long for **Connection**

*“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion…’”* Genesis 1:26

When God made the world His crowning achievement was people - making male and female in His image and blessing them to rule over the world on His behalf. Because God’s own image and likeness is stamped on us, ***we are rational, relational and moral beings*** who long for connection. Just as God is TRIUNE - an eternal relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit - so we are designed for communion with Him and with each other.

But that image and those capacities are now damaged because of sin.

1. There is **Bad** in everyone because the **Corruption** of Adam is embedded in us
   * This infects every part of us: heart, mind, soul and body. We suffer from **Disconnection** and aggravate that pain in others.

*“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”* Rom. 1:21

All of us are descended from Adam and Eve and so are ***born with a selfish, sinful nature***. Every part of us is infected with this disease - heart, soul, mind, and body. And so, our moral compass is damaged, and we don’t always feel guilty when we do wrong things, and we don’t always know clearly what the right thing is to do. Confusion has entered the picture. And the main impact of sin is on our relationships. Though we are wired for connection with God and people those ***relationships are severely limited*** because of the sin in us and each other and the overall darkness of the world. (To say nothing of the devil.)

Given this baseline reality, ***is it any wonder that people need counseling a lot?*** Is it any wonder that people resort to all kinds of bad coping mechanisms? Drugs, alcohol, sex, money, hobbies, distractions… the list is endless. For the average person - and even many who call themselves Christians there is a “This is as good as it gets” kind of resignation to reality. Life is a struggle. And then you die. Bleak.

**So, let’s get to the good news**. Let’s get to the way forward. What Tripp and Powlison and others have called gospel-centered LAY-counseling, Crabb called CONNECTING.

“Connecting is a kind of relating that happens when the powerful life of Christ in one person meets the good life of Christ in another… Connecting is the actual life of God, the energy with which the Father and Son relate to each other, a set of inclinations put in our hearts by the Spirit and kept alive by his presence. It is a power that is most fully released as we develop a compelling and awe-inspiring vision of who another person is and what he or she could become because of the gospel.” Larry Crabb, *Connecting* p. 66

There are two parts to this, and we will go to Ephesians 1 to see them in glorious gospel detail. Here they are in that top line: the powerful life of Christ in one person meets the GOOD life of Christ in another. Something powerful. Something good.

* Do you believe there is Good developing in every follower of Jesus, no matter what you see on the surface?
* Do you believe there is Power in YOU to help your brother or sister, no matter how incapable you feel to address the problem?

Pause for a moment to consider ***if you REALLY believe these two statements***. Thinking of our couple from earlier - do you believe there is good in this angry, unloving husband? Do you believe there is good in this critical, nit-picking wife?

So many marriages ***caught in this “Crazy Cycle”*** spiral down to divorce because both parties lose hope in this. They stop seeing any good in the other person and only see the bad. They stop believing that anyone has the power to help them - even the professional counselors. Maybe they went to counseling a few times and it “didn’t work.” Maybe they shared with a small group or a pastor and just couldn’t turn things around.

**This couple is sitting in your living room**, tears in their eyes. Do you believe you can help them? Do you believe there is good in them to be discovered and unleashed THROUGH JESUS?

Let me stoke the fires of your belief. Because ***I’m NOT saying to you - “Believe in yourself!”*** You can do it, lay-counselor! You’re good enough. You’re smart enough and doggone it… Nor am I saying that THEY are good enough. This isn’t a Home Depot message, “You can do it, we can help.”

That’s the world talking. Let’s listen to the Lord through the Bible so we see **HE CAN DO IT**. Jesus can save this marriage. Jesus can break this addiction. Jesus can heal this depression. Jesus can restore your hope. Jesus can rebuild ANYTHING this world and our sin has broken down. Anything. He defeated sin and death and hell and the devil. He can handle your marriage issues. Jesus can do it - THROUGH YOU. ***That’s the GOOD that’s in you - Jesus. And that’s the POWER that’s in you - Jesus.*** Look at Ephesians 1 and let your heart sing with this gospel truth.

**The Good in You because of Jesus:**

1. In Christ you are a **Saint**

“To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.” Eph. 1:1

**Three proofs of goodness** in every believer and three proofs of power in every believer. There are far more than three of each of these, but these jump off the page in this chapter.

In Christ, **you are a SAINT**. On your own, you were a SINNER. But at the moment you committed your life to Jesus your old self DIED and a new person was born in Christ. You are not that old, wicked, selfish sinner anymore. That’s not you. That person is dead, crucified with Jesus and buried with him. Sealed away forever.

Now you are a holy one, a saint. Paul is not preaching platitudes here, he is opening his letter with gospel truth. ***You are not a saint because you are faithful, you are faithful because you are a saint.*** Holy ones who belong to Jesus will be faithful because of JESUS. His love is relentless and persevering. He never fails.

This is why there is good in every single Christian - no matter what you see on the surface. No matter what the presenting problem - gambling, pornography, broken marriage, diseased heart, bitter spirit, overwhelmed or depressed. ***Underneath all of that is a SAINT*** - a holy one for whom Jesus died. And in Christ, that person is HOLY, declared righteous forever, with the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit actively working inside of them.

Every follower of Jesus is a SAINT even when they look like a sinner. That’s the old self coming out, it’s not who you are anymore. In Christ you are also:

**The Good in You because of Jesus:**

1. In Christ you are **Beloved**

“In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons… he has blessed us in the beloved.” Eph. 1:5-6

You are a child of God! Chosen, accepted, precious, BELOVED. There is a nice play on words there in verse 6. Some of you may have the Beloved capitalized showing that it refers to Jesus. Others may have it lowercase implying that we are blessed as a whole family of brothers and sisters. Both are right. Jesus is the Beloved and we are loved and adopted in Him. But because we are in Christ, ***you and I are ALSO the BELOVED***. When God looks at you, He speaks the same words He did over Jesus, “You are my beloved son. You are my beloved daughter. With you I am well pleased.”

Remember **the prodigal son**. He did the worst things you could do as a Jewish young man. He seriously disrespected his father. He wasted half of the family estate. He lived the most immoral, disgusting lifestyle. And he ended up sitting in a literal pigsty. But when he came home, what did the father do?

Did the father stand on the porch with his arms crossed, an angry scowl on his face?

Sometimes I bet you feel that way about God. ***Like He is angry with you*** - terribly disappointed. Furious even.

No. The Father RAN to his son. He RAN. ***He embraced his wayward, sinful, pig-smelling son.***

And before the young man could even finish his speech about living like a servant and working off his debt, the Father cut him off, put his best robe on his shoulders, his own ring on his finger and new sandals on his feet. **The Father reinstated him to FULL SONSHIP**. There was no consideration of a probationary period or a negotiation about how much work had to be done to earn his place in the family again.

The Father looks on you - no matter what you’ve done, no matter how far you’ve gone - ***and says, “BELOVED.”***

The Father knows there is good there - and the one evidence of the good at that point is simply that the young man came HOME. That’s it. That’s the only thing you could possibly affirm about this guy. But it’s a place to start.

Whoever comes to you, ***if they are asking for help, that is a HUGE turning point***. It’s what we call “rock bottom” in recovery ministry. Until someone comes to the end of their own resources and ideas, they aren’t really ready to change. Only when they hit that true, deep rock bottom are they in a position to really experience grace.

***So let’s be a safe place for each other!*** Let’s be like that Father with open arms - starting with a loving embrace not an angry scowl. Some of you long for that very moment with your own sons and daughters. You pray for and long for the day when he or she will simply come home.

There is good there. You know there is. For every follower of Jesus is a saint who is BELOVED as a child of God. And:

**The Good in You because of Jesus:**

1. In Christ you are **Growing**

“I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints.” Eph. 1:15

From his initial greeting and gospel reminder, ***Paul flows right into a prayer*** of deep gratitude for the believers in Ephesus. He celebrates their faith and love. Have you noticed Paul starts all of his letters this way? Ephesus was one of the better churches in the first century. But Paul starts with this positive affirmation of the goodness of Jesus he sees in them in every letter, even to Corinth, the screw-ups of the early church. Even to Galatia, the legalists.

Jesus did the same thing in his letters to the seven churches in Revelation. He affirmed, ***“I see this in you.”***

The first step in true connecting is to ***AFFIRM THE GOOD***. Recognize it - call it out. And name it CORRECTLY as the goodness and grace of JESUS. The couple is sitting in front of you, and you say, “I thank God for your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for each other.” I see Jesus in you - there is GOOD there. ***And it is GROWING!***

Because that’s what Jesus does. That’s what the Holy Spirit does. **The Kingdom of God is like that** - it starts small, with just a mustard seed of faith. But it starts growing right away. It spreads like yeast in the dough. It grows like a tree, stretching out its branches. The Holy Spirit starts working immediately to produce His fruit in your heart and life. And He never stops. The life of Jesus is in you and that circulation of His divine blood cannot help but produce good things.

***Do you believe it?***

Whichever side of the table you’re on right now, do you believe that there is good there? If you’re the one in trouble, it must be hard for you to believe. Guilt and shame and the accusations of the enemy pile on top of you trying to discourage you and beat you down. Unfortunately, the judgment of believers - even if it’s just perceived - can add to the suffocating pile. As ***hard as divorce is for people*** to go through - as much as it tears you up inside to be rejected by the one who promised to love and cherish you for life - the church often adds insult to injury there by judging and isolating and sometimes overtly punishing the couple getting the divorce.

There may be **couples here teetering on the edge today**. When you think about that other person do you believe this? Do you believe there is good there? Do you believe Jesus is working in their heart? And this brings us to the other side of the table: do you believe the power of Jesus is in you to HELP them?

**Connecting happens** when something powerful in you meets something good in another person. Both the goodness and the power come from Jesus - that’s why there’s a spark. At this point in Ephesians 1 ***Paul flows right into prayer*** - first giving thanks for the good things he sees in the believers and then praying for the power of Jesus to be unleashed through them.

**The Power in you because of Jesus:**

1. The Spirit of **Wisdom**

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” Eph. 1:17

It’s important to see that **Paul PRAYS for this**. We don’t get the wisdom and revelation automatically. We have to pray for it and seek it and dig into God’s Word and engage with other believers. It is not a promise in Scripture that we will have wisdom from God UNLESS we ask for it. Then it IS a promise.

***Do you see how significant this is for our ministry to one another?***

You hear about an addiction or an eating disorder or an abuse situation - and ***you immediately feel inadequate***. “I don’t have the training or expertise to get into this kind of situation,” you think to yourself. I know you do because you call me and try to pawn this kind of thing off on me and I do my best to process with you and then hand it right back, don’t I? Completely unhelpful. Or genius.

Do you see that you have at your disposal the wisdom and knowledge and insight of GOD HIMSELF. **The Holy Spirit is available** to you every second of every day - and He is much more powerful than Siri or Alexa or Chat GPT or even Tony Stark’s Jarvis if you want to get really fancy.

And remember, ***the goal is not some mystical Freudian insight***. You are not attempting to delve into their superego or explore the id, whatever that might mean. **The goal is to connect with the HEART of the person** - and assuming it’s a believer you are working with, the Holy Spirit is there with that person too!

Crabb says it this way:

“A vision we give to others of who and what they could ***become*** has power when it echoes what the Spirit has already spoken into their souls.” Larry Crabb, *Connecting* p. 165

The believer stuck in sin KNOWS he can do better. She knows she HAS TO do better. The Holy Spirit is already bringing conviction and leading to a solution - that’s why they are sitting in front of you looking for your help and prayer.

***And let’s never neglect the PRAYER part.*** If our ministry to one another is based on anything OTHER than prayer it is again trading one expression of the flesh for another. Their sin for your pride.

Connecting happens when you are able to look past the presenting problem and help the person see past it to. Help them remember their first love for Jesus - and with a couple, their first love for each other. Help them see the good that is in there, even if it is really deep down.

Your words will ring hollow if they are false hopes or platitudes. “You’re the most generous person I’ve ever known,” won’t work with the person who has racked up tens of thousands in credit card debt and hasn’t given a penny to the church in five years. “You’re the most disciplined person in the church” won’t resonate with someone who hasn’t held down a job for more than 6 weeks at a time.

***The good we see and point out has to REALLY be there.*** Which means we have to take time to really LOOK. We have to **really LISTEN**.

Back in college when I first read this book and was first experiencing what Crabb was talking about we used this simple tool for accountability groups that came from John Wesley. Wesley was the one who started small groups way back in the 1700s. His original group he called a holiness club - let’s not bring that name back, though the intent is noble. But Wesley trained his leaders to use three questions when they met:

**Wesley’s Three Questions:**

* What **Sins** have you committed this week?
* What **Temptations** are you facing?
* What means of **Grace** is God giving you to stand up to those temptations?

We called it S.T.G. Sting. And the questions do sting. Hard to dodge these.

Do you see the power in them? The assumption is that we ALL sin. We all struggle. We all battle temptation. So be honest about it! Share where you are REALLY at. Don’t hide it. Odds are the others in your group are facing something very similar!

But also notice - whatever you’re going through, there is grace there for you. This is all based on **1 Cor. 10:13** - “No temptation has overtaken you except that which is common to man. And God is faithful, who will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear but when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out, so you can stand up under it.”

Our temptations and struggles are COMMON. We all deal with them. The devil will try to convince you that you are the only one. It’s a lie. His playbook is really thin. But isolation is a big move he uses. If you stay alone long enough and hide your sins and struggles you are tremendously vulnerable to those temptations.

And one of the ***primary means of grace God*** gives us to stand up under our trials and temptations is EACH OTHER! So don’t walk alone! Don’t isolate. Connect. You need your brothers and sisters, and they need you.

You have the wisdom of God at your fingertips because the Holy Spirit will fill you with His wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus. Just ask. And have others pray for you. That’s why you’re powerful in Christ - you have His wisdom. Second:

**The Power in you because of Jesus:**

1. The Revelation of **Hope**

“Having the eyes of your heart enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you.” Eph. 1:18

This is what the supernatural revelation is for: a greater awareness of and appreciation for our HOPE in Christ.

And this is the main thing people need when they come to us for help. **They need HOPE**.

Remember the turning point of ***It’s a Wonderful Life*** when the angel gets sent down? He asks what the problem is with good old George Bailey, “Is he sick?” “No. Worse. He’s discouraged.”

One of the reasons that movie is so powerful and makes you cry every time is that you see the whole roller coaster of George Bailey’s life. He works so hard and does his best and life just keeps hitting back at him until he feels like he just can’t take it anymore. He becomes ***convinced that the world would be a better place without him in it*** - so the angel gives him a glimpse of what Bedford Falls would look like if he, George Bailey, had never been born.

The movie is a classic because it gives us all HOPE and it ***reminds us of what is really important*** - not money, not power, not status. In the end we see that George really was the richest man in town, not because he had money but because he had FRIENDS.

That whole movie is really about **the power of CONNECTING**, right? George had come through for pretty much everyone in that town - and in the end, they came through for him. Arguably Mary is the true hero of the whole story but that gets us off track.

The point is that people need HOPE. They need perspective. And that’s what Paul prays for here in Eph. 1 - that we would see ETERNITY. What is the hope to which Jesus has called us?

**The Power in you because of Jesus:**

1. The Revelation of **Hope**

“The hope to which he has called you… the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” Eph. 1:18

There’s another play on words here - what is the glorious inheritance? It’s the kingdom itself, right? Heaven, eternity, the new heaven and the new earth. But it’s also US - the saints. ***We are part of JESUS’ glorious inheritance!*** We are the primary gift God the Father is giving to God the Son and that Jesus is giving right back to the Father.

We need to remind each other that not only is there GOOD in every follower of Jesus, there is GLORY!

***Jesus has placed His own GLORY inside each of us*** in the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus prays this in John 17 and Paul writes about it in Romans 8. “Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us.” And that same glory revealed TO us is the glory that will be revealed IN US. Listen to John 17.

**The Power in you because of Jesus:**

1. The Revelation of **Hope**

“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.” John 17:22

***The very glory of JESUS*** - the eternal Son of God - is what Jesus has given to US. We have that glory. We have His love, His power, His wisdom, His goodness - we have every spiritual blessing in Christ because we have the Holy Spirit who is in Himself the very fullness of God.

And we have that glory for one very specific purpose: **that we may be ONE**. Just as Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him. That is the unity we are called to live out. That is CONNECTING. The reason we can connect is because God is the great Connector. Eternally united in the infinite love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit - our God IS relationship. **He IS love.** He IS connection.

And at the moment of salvation, ***you stepped INTO that reality*** - that overwhelming, overflowing, love that surpasses knowledge.

Think about our marriage example. The couple is being pulled apart by the world, the flesh and the devil. ***Here is little old YOU trying to hold those pieces together.*** But then you step back and realize that the One holding up your hands is God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is working IN you and THROUGH you to bring His life, His love, His power, His goodness into this couple.

***Are you feeling the HOPE?*** Is the Holy Spirit opening your eyes to the riches of your glorious inheritance in the saints?

One more PROOF that you have power. The Bible says you do.

**The Power in you because of Jesus:**

1. The Power of the **Resurrection**

“What is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe…” Eph. 1:19

This is what Paul is really praying for this group of believers: that they would have supernatural insight, Spirit-illuminated awareness of the POWER of Jesus that is in them and that can work through them. He goes on for three more verses to celebrate the infinite power of Jesus who conquered sin and death forever and took his place in glory at the right hand of the Father, above every other power and authority - where He reigns over all things and serves as Head of the Church - now look at verse 23:

**The Power in you because of Jesus:**

1. The Power of the **Resurrection**

“Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” Eph. 1:23

This is what Jesus is doing right now - this is **God’s plan, the mystery revealed in Christ** - that He is uniting all things in Christ. God is filling the whole world with the knowledge of the glory of Jesus - THROUGH US. He is filling all things in all ways - through His body.

That’s you and me.

So, when you meet with someone and quickly realize that they are EMPTY - guess what? **YOU have the means to help them get filled back up**.

* ***Your discouraged friend***, struggling with anxiety and depression - by listening, praying for and encouraging them you can be a part of how JESUS fills them up.
* ***That struggling couple*** - their marriage love tank totally dry - by praying for them, loving them, walking with them - you can join Jesus in His work of filling them back up.
* A difficult child, a friend with an addiction, someone in a financial crisis - they feel empty and desperate - but YOU can step into that dark place and bring the light and love and FULLNESS of Jesus.

Let’s get the picture right - you and I don’t supply the water. **We are just the HOSE**. When a house is on fire and the fire department arrives, does anyone praise and thank the HOSE? That hose plays a role, but it’s the fire fighters using it and the water supply they connect into that does the real work.

You and I are the hose. Jesus is the water. The way Jesus is filling and blessing and uniting the world is through US.

Do you believe it? Do you believe there is GOOD in you? Do you believe there is POWER in you? That’s the power of connecting.

Let’s pray.