

**Intro:** Our trip to Cuba was a great success. We got to visit almost all of the Pastors we planned, and got insight container One of the things I was able to do was meet with a very special friend that I probably saw for last time. Jose, my driver: My Cuban father. Mid 70's, health not good, Kids and Grandkids all Dr's in Spain. Moving him Honestly, it was a very difficult for me when I left him. He is a very special person to me. Closest to father I had Jose drove for me for almost 10 years. Not a believer in Jesus, but is a wonderful man. I Never knew...watching me closely. Listening to me preach, teach, watching as I ministered to the Cuban's...that he loved more than I do. One day about 5 years or so ago he came to me one day and said, "I'm ready." I didn't even know what he was talking about Here is what he said. *"I've been watching you for many years. You are real. You love my people with God's love. I want that."* I believe like you do. I want that kind of love. I want to be baptized! Our hearts have been knit together ever since.

Today I want to talk with you about HOW and WHY we build THAT kind of relationship with people. Relationships that nurture your soul. Relationships that last through time and distance. Relationships that change you...others You see, we all want that right? We want people in our lives that MATTER. That we love...and love us! **BE CONNECTED**

That is what Peter is writing to us about in 1 Peter 1:22-2:12. Page 857

Connected: To God And Others

**1. When We Are Connected To Others We Love and Are Loved More Deeply.** 1:22-25

One of the striking differences I notice in Cuba is the DEPTH of relationships: USA often very surface: Cuba not so much

- Sincere: Lit = Sincerely: *With no pretense, no dissimulation, no "fake", no hypocrisy*
- Love: *Unconditional care that expresses itself in action: Agape kind of love, from the heart of God*
- Deeply: Lit = *Without ceasing, fervently, Intensely*
- Heart: *Originates from within, Not something you conjure up...Flows*

**Illus:** Jose and I are so connected, I knew somehow that I needed to bring him a gift. Guava and Cheese.

I didn't know why...but I was so convinced...I told the driver when we left Bayamo (400-500 mile drive)

2 Things important

~ Get me to Havana Safely

~Find me guava and cheese somewhere along the way! Jose loves it...can't get it in Havana!

*Gave gift, As I was leaving Jose started to cry, said...God knew what I needed, my granddaughter asked 1 thing I couldn't give*

**Appl:** Who do you have in your life with that kind of relationship?

If you don't have that kind of friend...your life is poorer without them. God uses them greatly to help you grow

**Appl:** It doesn't come by accident! It doesn't "just happen" Those relationships grow out of many, many experiences

Dr Bill Williams once told me: It's like making a strong rope. One small thread at a time. Each experience stronger

- ❖ Shared Ministry: Years of driving me from one church to another
- ❖ Shared Prayer: Watching as we prayed for the Church and people
- ❖ Shared Fellowship: 100 stories: Fishing Pole: For 5 years...*Teach me again how to fish, I want big fish like you!*

**2. When We Are Connected To Others We Grow In Our Spiritual Life.** 2:1-4

In the next couple of verses Peter tells us HOW to encourage spiritual growth in our lives

Not only do we experience love more completely when we are connected, we also grow spiritually much better.

Relationships are the rich fertile ground of spiritual growth. Peter gives us 4 actions that help

We know that: Proverbs tells us: Pr 27:17 *"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."*

- Get rid of sin in your life that breaks relationship:  
He lists 5 different things: Representative, not a complete list, but NOTICE EACH of them is a RELATIONAL sin! These are the things that affect RELATIONSHIPS...  
When we break relationships...we hinder the process of spiritual growth in our life!  
~malice: *antagonistic evil* ~deceit: *to trick or decoy*  
~hypocrisy: *act a part, not relate truthfully* ~envy: *jealously*  
~slander: *backbiting, gossip*
- Desire the right things that help you grow!  
It is an out with the bad in with the good thing!  
~Crave: Lit = *to intensely desire, to want to possess, to long for* (study of word of God)  
~Pure spiritual milk: Heb 5:12 *"The milk of the word of God, followed up by the meat of the word!"*
- Keep Coming to Him  
Lit = draw near to Him! *Keep on coming...it's an action that continues...over and over again*
- Being Built: Lit = *you are being built up, constructed, word used for when a carpenter builds a house*  
Illus: *Not the best part! Jesus used this word when He told Peter*  
*You are Peter and on this rock I will BUILD (same word!) my church*

**Applic:** If we are going to grow into the Christians God wants us to be...It will not happen

1. In isolation
2. Automatically
4. Sitting in a chair and listening to sermon
4. Without others to help us
5. With Broken Relationships

**Applic:** Are you connected that way? Growth takes place one experience, one bible study, one ministry event at a time

### 3. When We Are Connected To Others We Can Share Jesus More Effectively.

2:9-12

When we have authentic, sincere, loving relationships we earn the right to share what we know of Jesus with others Peter expresses that in two different ways.

- He talks about who we ARE in Jesus  
When we are “connected to Jesus” this is what we are!  
~Chosen people:           *God hand picked us as His own!*           ~Royal Priesthood:   *Go between*  
~Holy nation:            *God’s people...Apple of His eye*           ~Belonging to God  
We are HIS...Unmistakably marked as His prize possession. We are HIS people
- When we are connected to Jesus, This is what we DO as God’s people  
Declare His praises:       We Tell the world of what it is like to be the people of God  
  We let everyone we encounter know, God has blessed, and provided and protected  
1. With Words:            Declare: Lit = *to publish abroad, to celebrate, to point out to others*  
2. With Deeds:            Deeds: vs 12: *See your deeds: Lit = your work, your toil, your actions*  
Illus:                        That’s a part of what Tyler Heights is, Food Pantry, City Serve  
  We are living out the love of Jesus in a practical way every time we serve others  
  As we do that...we earn the right to share His love and His grace and His message with others

#### CONCL:

Two goals I have for this sermon today. I want you to be Connected to God...and I want you to be Connected to Others

1. Maybe you are in the place Jose was: You have been watching, looking, evaluating...Ready to follow Jesus: Come  
Your next step is to accept the forgiveness He bought and paid for with His blood. Go Public, Be baptized,

2. If you ARE connected...We want to celebrate that...and encourage you...Keep up the good work. Continue doing the right

Vs 5 says we like living stones are being built up

We are going to have a fun time of illustrating God’s work in our Church

Way In: Got two yellow legos

Without anything on it: For you to write your name, take it to Gym...place it as a part of a church we are building!

With writing:                Take it home: That is a reminder for you: God wants me to build His church DECLARING

Now,,its not just the yellow blocks that we will use to build our church When you get to the gym,

Every ministry, every mission, every fellowship group, every Bible study and small group has a table

Each kind of group is represented by a different color

If you are in a mission group: find that booth...pick up a block...take it along with the yellow one to the center...place it!

In addition, maybe you need to ADD something to your spiritual life...to go to the next level, add a new color!

If you want to do that...stop by the right booth...sign up...pick up that block...take it and place it

2. If you ARE NOT connected. Today is the day! Just like Brittany, you can take a step forward,

Maybe you aren’t ready to be baptized, or to be a member. But you are ready to take a step forward!

Maybe you have never been in a focused bible study. Do it

Maybe you have never stepped out of your comfort zone join those who give regularly. Do it

Maybe you have never signed up for ministry to serve others:       Do it

Maybe there is a mission opportunity you want to try                Do it!

You CAN have those kinds of relationships...but they don’t come by accident

Today is the day YOU can start to accelerate your spiritual growth

You can begin to develop those relationships

You can earn the right to share your faith with others through ministry

I have that relationship with Jose built up over time, one ministry, one prayer, one bible study, one experience at a time

You can have that too...but you have to step out. You have to make the time...You have to choose to have that relationship

Today you are going to have a choice.

Leave: Go to the Gym, Get some food, Place your block...Look at the options before you...and choose

Tyler Heights                Women’s Bible Study

Food Pantry                 Band of Brothers

City Serve                  Worship

Grounds                    Any of 56 different opportunities

Or...You can quietly slip out...go home...things stay the same

Tomorrow you wont know the difference...but a year from now...or when things get tough

What you will discover is...You haven’t grown any...You don’t have those relationships...You don’t have the right to share