
DEEPER WATERS

Going Deeper as a Family

Last week I talked about the moment when Jesus chose His first disciples and He started with fishermen. We saw this beautiful interaction between Jesus and Simon and how Simon experienced the miraculous when he responded to Jesus by faith, with the phrase “because you say so”. Totally undone and in a place of humility and recognition of his own sinfulness, Jesus then calls Simon and his brother Andrew and their fishing partners James and John to follow Him and He said, “from now on you will fish for people.”

Jesus is still calling us to follow Him. He’s still calling us to fish for people. He’s still inviting us out into deeper waters so that He might do the miraculous. This year God is calling us at Riverlife as we go to seek and save the lost to go a little deeper. To go a little deeper as a Riverlife family, deeper in our intimacy as we follow Jesus and deeper in our expression of God’s love to the world around us.

Everything Jesus was about, that we sometimes make so complicated, is just a single word: It’s about Love—rightly understood.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. Love God. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbour as yourself.”
Matthew 22: 37-39 (NIV)

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
John 13:34-35 (NIV)

As we go deeper as a family, God isn’t calling us to be the smartest, richest, prettiest, most well-educated people—He wants us to be the most loving.

I wonder what it would look like for us as at Riverlife to each go a little deeper as a family?

- + Where unity is celebrated in the diversity of those gathered behind the one vision.

- + Where barriers are pulled down and every effort is made for people to belong to the Riverlife family.
- + Where we experience God's grace through the family of believers.
- + Imagine seeing a greater diversity of people from all walks of life and every nation feeling at home here at Riverlife.
- + Imagine if we could embrace one another's pain points, sorrows or heartache and extend love and empathy, and forgiveness, to own our own mess we may have made and love each other towards healing.

The Power of a Loving Community

Acts 3:1-11

Acts 4:1-4

Following Jesus' example, Peter and John give this crippled man something he's not looking for but is desperate for; out of something they don't have but have access to and a whole bunch of people were transformed.

This is foundational for us if as a family we are going to go into deeper waters to become all that God desires us to be as a church.

Sign #1 - Everybody's Welcome

In the church family that's committed to going deeper, in Jesus' community - everybody's welcome.

Following Jesus' example, Peter and John stop to connect, to lock eyes with this man in his shame and segregation from community and offer him something far greater and totally unexpected than that which he is asking for. The religious leaders labelled Jesus a friend of sinners (Luke 15:2). Jesus welcomed everyone!

This is the power of love and community. It's in our bodies and it's in our souls and it is needed by our world and should be offered by the church (Galatians 3:28).

There is a dual responsibility we all need to own.

1. The first is that we need to go deeper into being the kind of community that says everyone is welcome and we do all we can to stop for, recognise and walk with those amongst us who are hurting.
2. The second is that we need to bravely enter God's family of believers.

When we go deeper, we feel more vulnerable and are often tempted to pull away, but that's exactly the time we need to remain close in faithful community... in the struggle and tender hope of the new and not yet comfortable.

Do you think God can still do that? Do you think it could happen today? Do you think God could do that here? Do you think God could do that in you? What would we each need to do to go a little deeper into that kind of love for one another?

Sign #2 - Anything's Possible

In the church where we take steps to going deeper in following Jesus, there's another sign: anything's possible.

The same Simon who is undone by the miraculous haul of fish (Luke 5:8-10), becomes Peter who stood boldly before a crowd and realised the prophetic act of Jesus making him a fisher of people, when about 3000 repented and became followers of Jesus (Acts 2:42).

Moved with compassion in Acts 3 he looks at the crippled beggar and gives him something unexpected. Peter drew on the name of Jesus and a miracle happens. Transformation takes place in a couple of ways:

- + He now leaps for joy – his legs are working!
- + He now is praising God – the love of God demonstrated through the healing brings the man to a new place of praise!
- + He enters a place of worship.

The miraculous opens up opportunity for the love of God to be understood which provides a great platform for the proclamation of the Good News (Acts 4:1-4). Anything is possible when you have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

As we go deeper as a Riverlife family everybody is welcome. Anything is Possible. But this is going to take you to join in. Just as Jesus chose His 12 disciples for a new community and to then go and build new Jesus communities, so too He is inviting you to do the same. He wants you to choose to connect with others in healthy, loving and supportive relationships, all of us taking a step towards going deeper as a family.

Discussion Questions

1. Simon Peter's transformation is quite staggering – that's power of salvation and God's transformational work by His grace. Share your story of transformation with the group.
2. There is a dual responsibility we all need to own. The first is that we need to go deeper into being the kind of community that says everyone is welcome and we do all we can to stop for, recognise and walk with those amongst us who are hurting. The second is that we need to bravely enter God's family of believers. Discuss.
3. What would we each need to do to go a little deeper into a kind of love for one another where we stop to engage the wounded, rejected and hurt? Stop and ask God to reveal to you who you might need to reconcile with or stop for.
4. Anything is possible when we have been with Jesus. Do you believe that? Why or why not?
5. How does your Life Group create a place where people feel they can be open and honest, feel loved and find healing?
6. Pray for one another.