

Amanda Nichols: 11/3/20

Connecting

Recently, my oldest son, Casen, and I went for a walk-run. Run a little. Walk a little. Talk a little. Repeat. During this particular run, I told him that I needed to write a Member's Moment and needed some ideas. And did he give me some ideas!

What does it mean to fear God?

Are there really demons?

Why did they stone kids in the Old Testament? Do we matter?

Easy questions to tackle in a Member's Moment, right? I'm pretty sure Sydney had lighter topics in mind when she told me that I could pick the topic. While we didn't solve all of his questions, I did get a window into his almost-teenage mind. I felt thankfulness for the deep discussions while walking in the Oklahoma wind. After reflecting on that moment, I think a big part of the thankfulness is because of the connection it afforded us. Of course, connection between parents and children is important, pursued, and treasured, but my moment with Casen also reminded me of a conversation I had with colleagues at work recently.

I think it's fair to say that many of us are feeling disconnected as of late. Due to the pandemic, all aspects of life aren't normal whether it's church, work, or friendships. Virtual or in-person church can be challenging. Visiting with friends has presented new difficulties. Work seems to be harder right now, too. I've had to be more intentional about my friendships this year. Whether that's virtual coffee with friends or a quick walk outside to catch up, I know I always feel better when I have connection to friends.

I remember my Mamaw teaching me about friendship. I have this memory from when I was a teenager of Mamaw telling me that as a preacher's wife, she felt strongly it was important she had close friends in whatever church they were serving. That it was okay that she had best friends because Jesus seemed to have them, too. We all need special people in our lives who we can talk to when we need support. Friends help us feel connection through grief and celebration.

In Mark 16, Jesus goes to pray in Gethsemane taking his close friends, Peter, James, and John. Jesus tells them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Out of the crowds of people Jesus ministered to, he had disciples. Among the disciples, he had twelve disciples that were part of his inner circle. Yet, he seemed especially close with three of those disciples: Peter, James, and John. Maybe Jesus took those three on the night before he was crucified because he needed the support of his friends for what laid ahead.

This time of the year seems to get busy. School semesters are wrapping up. The holidays are approaching. It's easy to think about the To-Do lists and forget about connecting. Let's be intentional about carving out the time to do something one-on-one with someone or a few

people. We can be creative in what that looks like, but stay connected. It's worth it. You might even get a list of questions from a twelve-year-old to ponder.