

Do *they belong* together?









Then, the same day at evening,
being the first *day* of the week,
when the doors were shut where
the disciples were assembled, for
fear of the Jews, Jesus came and
stood in the midst, and said to
them, “Peace *be* with you.”

When He had said this, He showed
them *His* hands and His side. Then
the disciples were glad when they
saw the Lord.

John 20: 19 - 25

So Jesus said to them again,
“Peace to you! As the Father has sent
Me, I also send you.”

And when He had said this, He breathed
on *them*, and said to them,
“Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive the sins of any, they
are forgiven them; if you retain
the *sins* of any, they are retained.”

Now Thomas, called the twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

The other disciples therefore said to him, “we have seen the Lord.”

So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

The Disciples were a mix group.

Tax collectors, fisherman, administrators, violent men, crude language and some even lack of faith.

Why did Jesus select them?

What was the cause that united them?

They believed in the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, and they were expecting an earthy reward.

Matthew 19:27-29

Then Peter answered and said to Him,
“See, we have left all and followed You.
Therefore what shall we have?”

So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

The Disciples argue a lot about who was the most important person of the group:

1. Luke 9:46 An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.

2. Matthew 20:20-22

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. And he said to her, "what do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom..."

Some of them were vengeful:

Luke 9:54

When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

Some were capable of violence

John 18:10

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

Thomas presents a clear example of someone who knows about Jesus,

That can follow Jesus, but struggles to accept Jesus as God and Savior.

The question is, why Jesus accepted the disciples with all their faults?

1 Timothy 1:15

This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

George Barna groups the unchurched in the United States into five categories: (George Barna Seminar, Indianapolis. May 2001)

1. atheists, 14 percent;
2. those belonging to faiths other than Christian, 16 percent;
3. nominal Christians, 42 percent;
4. Christians with moderate commitment, 20 percent;
5. Christians with absolute commitment, 8 percent.

People have a natural need to be accepted, to have a sense of *Belonging*.

This is call in evangelism, relational evangelism, people joined churches if they feel they are accepted, if they have friends.

1. *Relational evangelism provides a natural network for sharing the good news of God's redemptive love.* Naturally, people who are close to each other share their faith with each other. Friends and relatives hang out together. They eat out together. They enjoy sharing and talking with each other.

2. Relational evangelism deals with receptive people. Often we hear that we are more effective with strangers than our families, but this is not necessarily true.

Andrew brought Peter. Philip introduced Nathaniel to Christ.

The jailer in Philippi brought his whole household to Jesus.

3. *Relational evangelism allows for unhurried and natural sharing of God's love.* In friendship evangelism, no one feels pressure to make anyone be baptized in a short period of time.

4. *Relational evangelism provides natural support when the new member comes to Christ.* The single most significant reason why people leave the church is that they do not have a support.

THE QUESTION
REMAINS:

Do people feel
they *belong* when
they visit the
Aiken
Church?

