

Chapter 12

Tell Me Who You Go With...

There are some sentences that stay with us for a lifetime.

Not because they are profound.

Because they are true.

My father used to say,

"Tell me who you go with... and I'll tell you who you are."

When I was younger, I thought he was talking about influence.

The friends we choose.

The company we keep.

The values we absorb.

He wasn't wrong.

But I now believe he was speaking a deeper truth than either of us understood.

We all become like something.

The question has never been *if*... Only *what*.

Some become shaped by fear.

Others by success or disappointment.

Some spend years becoming their wounds.

Others become their achievements.

Still others become the expectations placed upon them by people who never truly knew them.

Whether we notice it or not... we are always being formed.

When the religious leaders looked at Peter and John, they noticed something unusual.

Not polished arguments.

Not religious credentials.

Not impressive résumés.

They noticed courage.

Then they reached the only conclusion that made sense to them.

"These men have been with Jesus."

I have lived with those words for many years.

The older I become, the more beautiful they become.

Because they suggest that the deepest realities of our lives are visible.

Not perfectly... but unmistakably.

People may forget what we believe.

They may forget what we accomplish.

They may even forget what we say.

But they rarely forget how they felt after being with us.

That is a sobering thought... and a hopeful one.

Throughout this journey, we have spoken about stories.

About atmosphere.

About wells.

About trees.

About gardens.
About remaining.
About re-hydrated hearts.

All of them have been pointing toward one simple discovery.

Life is shared.

We become participants in whatever we continually receive.

Perhaps that is why love cannot be faked...

Kindness borrowed for a moment eventually grows tired.

Patience performed eventually becomes strained.

Peace rehearsed eventually reveals its effort.

Only shared life endures.

Only communion quietly becomes character.

I have spent much of my life walking the hallways of hospitals and homes.

I have stood beside beds where words became unnecessary.

I have watched tears speak more honestly than sermons.

I have seen frightened people become peaceful.

And peaceful people become teachers.

Not because they intended to teach.

Because life had become visible within them.

Some of my greatest instructors never stood behind a pulpit.

They lay in hospital beds.

They whispered gratitude while everything around them suggested despair.

They reminded me that the soul is capable of carrying a light no darkness can extinguish.

Perhaps that is the quiet miracle of the Christian life.

Not that ordinary people become extraordinary.

But that ordinary people become transparent.

Transparent enough that Love can be seen through them.

Transparent enough that mercy becomes believable.

Transparent enough that hope no longer sounds naïve.

Transparent enough that another human being quietly says,

"I don't know why... but I feel more alive."

Maybe that has always been the invitation.

Not to become famous.

Not to become admired.

Not even to become successful.

Simply to become available.

Available to Love.

Available to wonder.

Available to interruption.

Available to compassion.

Available to the quiet work of grace.

If this journey has given you anything, I hope it has not been new ideas.

Ideas eventually fade.

I hope it has given you new eyes.

Eyes that notice what hurry overlooks.

Eyes that recognize dignity before difference.

Eyes that see Christ not only in sacred spaces...

but in kitchens...

gardens...

hospital rooms...

shared meals...

tearful embraces...

and ordinary Tuesdays.

Because that is where I have found Him, The Presence, most often.

One day, perhaps someone will leave your presence unable to remember everything you said.

But they may remember that hope felt possible again.

That fear loosened its grip.

That they laughed more easily.

That silence felt safe.

That tears no longer needed apology.

They may never know why.

Neither may you...

And perhaps that is exactly as it should be.

The Book of Acts never tells us that Peter and John tried to convince people they had been with Jesus.

They didn't need to.

Life spoke first.

It always does.

So now...

allow me to borrow my father's words one final time:

Tell me who you go with... and I'll tell you who you are.

But after this journey...

I think I would gently add one more sentence.

Tell me who leaves your presence with more hope than when they arrived...

...and together we'll discover who has been walking with you.

Sit With This...

As you close this book...

don't ask, "*What should I do now?*"

Instead, ask something quieter. **Who am I becoming?**

Then...

Go sit with someone who is lonely.

Listen before speaking.

Forgive before defending.

Notice before judging.

Wonder before explaining.

Remain before rushing.

Love before everything else.

The rest... will quietly follow.
