Yesterday we looked at how to maintain relationships in a time of "social distancing." Today I want to look at how sadly natural "distancing" is for us even in the best of times.

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit." - Eph. 2:13-18

Yesterday we looked at the fact that distance protects. Unfortunately, we've made this truth a national identity. I'm not just talking about borders and walls, but about social structures we've created that distance us from others in order to protect ourselves, our beliefs, and our ways of life. Race, age, gender, religion, denomination, sexual identity, social class, political party affiliation... there seems to be no end to the ways in which we have divided ourselves and distanced ourselves from others. We gather in like-minded pods and share ideas and even physical space with those we know will agree with us and are like us. This can be a country, a denomination, a neighborhood, a friendship circle, or a facebook group. And once we find a group "like us", we distance ourselves from anyone else.

In this time when physical distancing is necessary for the health of our society, we will find it easier and easier to lean-in to our natural relational distancing as well. But this is not God's will. Paul makes it clear that God is working to tear down the walls that separate us, to open up conversation between differing groups. How? By focusing us not on the societal rules we've created to separate us but instead focusing us on Him. Why? To make peace. And do we ever need an influx of peace in our world today, COVID-19 or not.

Are you having conversations with people outside your "circle"? Are you spending as much time listening to others as telling them what you think? Are you willing to draw relationally near to those on the other side of the "dividing wall of hostility"?

Today, while you are reaching out to your friends to maintain relational closeness in a time of physical distancing, how might you also reach out to those who were distant from you before there even was a pandemic? Are you in relationship with people who can help you tear down those walls? Are there places where you've hunkered down socially with like-minded people that might be stifling your growth as a person?