

Be a norm breaker as a norm maker!

Mark 3:31-35

Education Sunday

Today, we congratulate Cami and Samantha on their achievements and bless their new journey in college. We see the promise of these two remarkable young women. We are excited to see how they will bring new energy and changes to the world as their dreams unfold. Continue to keep them in your prayers!

Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Through education, we not only gain knowledge and skills but we can also be liberated from our own ignorance and prejudice. Education is the key for transformation of the world and the self.

Family Structure and stereotype

A few years ago, Juhee needed to visit Korea. Before she left, she asked me to take pictures of our church members every Sunday. Normally, Juhee was the one who took pictures of church activities and posted them on the church's Facebook page. When I tried to take people's pictures, everyone already knew that it was Juhee who made me to do it. One church member asked, "pastor, did Juhee tell you to take pictures?" I answered, "Yes, she did and I am trying to be an obedient husband by following her orders." She told me that "Maybe you should preach on that."

When you hear the words, "obedient husband," how do you feel? Unfamiliar, strange, or maybe it sounds really great!! Then, when you hear the words, "obedient children or obedient wife," how do you feel? It sounds more familiar than, "obedient husband." Right? We feel this way because our society is still patriarchal in many aspects. We all have stereotypical images of gender roles in families and also stereotypical images of what makes a good family. So when we hear the words, "obedient husband," it feels a bit strange.

When we see someone breaking social norms, it makes us uncomfortable. Particularly if the norm breaker is a family member, it will surely bother us. But we must remember that social norms can also be oppressive. In the United States, social oppression has become institutionalized and we are socialized to accept oppression as normal. Racial segregation was completely normal a few decades ago. Expectations for women to be submissive to male family members was normal and is still the social norm in many countries.

Do you know Malala Yousafzai? She is a Pakistani activist for female education and was awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 becoming the youngest Nobel Prize recipient. Education for girls is still not normal in Pakistan and Malala stood against this oppressive social norm. When she broke this oppressive social norm by promoting the right of women to an education, she received multiple death threats and a Taliban gunman shot her on October 2012 when she was 15 years old. Malala survived the assassination attempt and became a prominent voice for female education and the right to education for all. Someone has to break oppressive social norms and make a way for change and liberation.

When His family heard what was happening, they came to take control of him.

Jesus was a norm breaker! When Jesus started his ministry, he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God, and taught many people through his words and actions. He didn't hesitate to enter a Samaritan town and even dared to speak with a woman one-on-one. He didn't

mind healing a man on the Sabbath day and enjoyed having a party with sinners. Jesus was a norm breaker!

Of course, religious leaders and some others did not like him, or approve of his ideas. Even Jesus's own family members didn't like what he was doing. When Jesus' family heard what Jesus had done, they might have suspected that he was out of his mind. They worried about their family reputation so they came to restrain him. Their ignorance and prejudice blinded them to seeing who Jesus really was and what he was really doing.

Jesus' teaching did not simply repeat the conventional religious teachings of his time. While many religious leaders only focused on keeping the law itself, which had become oppressive, Jesus taught and showed the true implications of laws by breaking oppressive laws and norms. Jesus even extended the meaning of family.

When Jesus's family came to control him, they could not come in because a crowd was already seated around him. When Jesus heard that his family was waiting for him outside of the house, Jesus said, "who is my mother? Who are my brothers? Who are my sisters? Looking around, taking in everyone seated around him, he said, "Right here, right in front of you—my mother and my brothers and my sisters... The person who obeys God's will is my brother and sister and mother." Jesus breaks the social norm and stereotype of family by extending the meaning of family. A family is a gathering of people who obey God's will. Asbury is a family in Christ. He was norm makers!

Cami and Samantha, as disciples of Jesus Christ, I encourage you to be norm breakers. Don't just comply with whatever you have learned or heard. Don't just comply with what society tells you to be and to do. But break oppressive social norms and be yourself as God intends. God knows who you really are and God knows the best of what you can be.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, also be a norm maker who transforms the world to a better world. Do you think you can change the world? Some have said, "the ones who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do." Jesus Christ believed that he was called to proclaim the good news about God transforming the world! His teaching and life have changed the history of the world. As follower of Jesus Christ, you have passion, energy, vision, ability and youth! You can make this world a better world by doing what you have been called to do! I know that many Christian youth leave the church when they go to college. But stay connected with God. Don't forget that you have your church family here and we will keep you in our prayers when you are away.

Asbury family, it's our joy and obligation to nurture the next generation of Christians. As these two brilliant young women enter into a new phase of their lives, support them with your prayers. God has made us a new family, so let us celebrate and congratulate together Cami and Samantha's new journey.