



Relationally Connected

Investing in relationships marked by encouragement and accountability

One of the things that people look for in a church is “good community.” All of us have a deep longing for community in our lives. Nobody likes to be alone, nor is anyone at their best when they are alone. Never in the Bible do we see an individual with a “lone ranger” mentality. Unfortunately, our American culture promotes this type of mentality and lifestyle. Not only does this limit our effectiveness for God, but it can also be fatal to our personal lives.

Q: When you think of the word “community,” what images come to mind?

Community is not a human invention. The Trinity exists in constant community with one another; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Genesis 1:26 God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” God created a Helper for Adam because He said it was “not good” for man to be alone.

Community is God’s dearest creation. It is only within community that there is the possibility of knowing and being known, loving and being loved, serving and being served, celebrating and being celebrated. It is in our relationships that we are able to demonstrate the love of Christ.

John 13:34-35

³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 17:22-23

²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Q: How are our relationships with other believers expressive of the kind of relationship we have with God?

Two essential elements of good relationships are encouragement and accountability. A beautiful picture of how this fleshes out in the church is painted for us in Acts 2:42: “All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.”

Here we see a group of believers in the early Church, bound together in Christ, choosing to study the Scriptures together, pray with one another, share resources, and spend time together to spur spiritual growth in one another.

Q: Do relationships in the church today typically look like Acts 2:42? What are some obstacles to being relationally connected that we face in our society?

The word encourage literally means “to give or speak courage.” Encouragement is the kind of expression that helps someone want to be a better Christian, even when life is rough. Not only is living life apart from encouraging relationships unbiblical, it’s also miserable.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Q: What are some observations we can make about encouragement from this passage?

Q: What are some benefits we receive as a result of “motivating” one another?

It is essential that our relationships be grounded upon accountability. To be accountable to others means to be regularly answerable for the key areas of our lives to like-minded individuals. We need others around us to keep us from thinking too highly of ourselves and call us to act when we need to change. We need people to point out blind spots in our life that we may not see, so we can sharpen our character and not hurt or offend others. Few would disagree with our need for accountability.

However, many of us are surrounded by unhealthy relationships. In these relationships, we don’t love people enough to tell them things that they may not like even though it will produce good results in their life. The irony in these relationships is not that we will hurt others, but we fear being rejected by that person.

Proverbs 27:6

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 27:17

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

Final Thoughts:

- The hope of Mars Hill Community Church is to grow a body of believers that are interdependent and not independent.
- We need relationships that are marked both by encouragement and accountability.
- Choosing to invest in relationships can be risky and painful. However, the sacrifice is worth the benefit - growth in Christlikeness.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Are you Relationally Connected?

1. Who in my life do I trust enough to discuss problems with?

2. Aside from my family, do I have any authentic relationships?

3. Do I wait on others to initiate relationships, or do I seek people out in developing relationships?

4. If I am in a crisis, who are the people in my life that would rally around me and give me support, encouragement, etc.?

Examples of personal goals to help you become Relationally Connected

1. Rather than waiting for people to come to you, initiate conversation with a new person each Sunday.

2. Set up a monthly lunch with someone you would like to have a closer relationship with.

3. Practice listening and waiting for others to finish before offering an opinion.
4. Write encouraging notes to others.
5. If you don't have any close friends, begin to pray daily for God to bring you one or two.
6. If you are in an inauthentic or hollow relationship, confess your desire to see it taken to a "relationally connected" level.
7. Join a community group at Mars Hill Community Church.
8. Don't be afraid to give a gentle rebuke when you see a friend in error.
9. Pray before you point out errors in friends' lives. Make sure you're doing it because God wants you to and not out of selfish motives.
10. Be open to the rebuke of others, without getting defensive or blowing up. 1. Seek the counsel of others before you make a big decision.
12. Tell others when you are hurting.
13. Find someone to mentor you and/or find someone for you to mentor.
14. Take a personality test in an effort to learn how you relate to others and how others may perceive you.
15. Read a book a year on relationships Ex: (Connecting by Larry Crabb, Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman, Dropping your Guard by Chuck Swindoll)
16. Constantly evaluate whether you are a "giver" or a "taker" in relationships.
17. Ask people three questions about themselves before you talk about yourself. 18. Invite a new friend or neighbor over for dinner once a month.

At Mars Hill Community Church, Life Groups are the primary means for developing Christ-centered relationships, accountability, and encouragement. Contact the church office or go to our website to discover more about joining a Life Group.