

# Keep it Connected- 3/20/22

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**Main point:** God has designed us for beautiful, messy community. It is costly and WORTH it!!

We're in a **loneliness epidemic**. Why?

What about you? **Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5. 1 = I feel disconnected and alone. 5 = I feel connected.**

**We are designed for community.** We can see it in God's nature, in the life of Jesus, and how the early followers of Jesus interacted.

Acts 2: 42, 46

The primary activity of the church was one-anothering one another. – Andy Stanley  
That hasn't changed.

Instead of **What did I get from church today?** Ask; **How did I give back to someone else's life today?**

There are 59 "one another" commands in the New Testament.

(<https://www.smallgroupchurches.com/the-59-one-anothers-of-the-bible/>)

## 1) LOVE one another (16 times).

- **God first loved us.** "We love because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19
- **The command to Love God is coupled with loving others.** And He has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister." 1 John 4:21

## 2) ENCOURAGE one another (7 times)

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing..(1 Thessalonians 5:11)

## 3) Live in harmony with one another (3 times)

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. (Romans 12:16)

**The One Anothers require Real. Human. Interaction.**

**WHY do we need to fight for community--**

- We need encouragement and support.
- We need appropriate physical touch—handshakes, hugs, a hand on our shoulder.
- We need accountability. It's just loving follow-up.
- We need to suffer together and rejoice together.
- Your unique story is needed in someone else's life!

## **HOW to build community? It starts with our attitude.**

- Decide that community matters and you have a role to play.
- Surrender and ask for God's help. Ask "How can I give to someone today?"
- Be willing to be inconvenienced and to get messy. That's real life.

## **SUNDAY SPECIFIC TIPS:**

- Commit to attending regularly.
- Arrive early and stay after to visit with others.
- Try to meet someone new each week. Look for those who are alone.
- Use the question of the week.
- Go BIG and go SMALL. Sunday gatherings are a start but a smaller community is also needed.

## **WHAT ARE SOME OPTIONS?**

- CHECK-OUT Groups at EFC. New book club: *Find Your People* by Jennie Allen
- FORM CIRCLES outside of church with co-workers, neighbors, exercise buddies. *We'll help you with coaching to start a group.*
- MAKE A SMALLER group.
- BE OPEN to volunteering.
- GATHER AROUND A TABLE. When is the last time you invited someone over for dinner?

## **What keeps you from community? You can't expect connection if you don't circle up.**

**God has designed us for beautiful, messy community.** It is costly but it's worth it!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Icebreaker: Share about one of your childhood friends and what you admire about him or her.
- 2) What is your rating for connectedness right now? (Use the scale of 1 to 5, with 1 is you feel disconnected and 5 is you feel connected). Explain your score.
- 3) What "one another" command does your current community (or small group) do well? Where would you like to see improvement?
- 4) What is something you can do to improve the connectedness of our church family? What ideas do you have for improving the quality or depth of connection in your smaller circles?
- 5) Who is someone you can connect with this week to show the love of Jesus?
- 6) *Optional idea:* spend time in prayer thanking God for your group and the good gifts He has deposited in each individual. Pray for our church family to step into deeper levels of community. (SEE ALSO—Prayer on the next page)

## *PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK - The Imprint of Jesus*

Father I come before You this day, overwhelmed by Your holiness and greatness. In light of who You are, I am keenly aware of the weakness of my fleshly nature. Have mercy on me O God. Forgive me for going my own way and not aligning my life with Your perfect will. I confess that I have been misguided by my own self-serving purposes and have lost sight of Your face.

Remove from me I pray, the shame of my sin that keeps me from running into Your arms, looking on Your face and receiving Your forgiveness. I ask Father for a fresh infilling of Your Holy Spirit that will transform my living and display Your glory to those who do not yet know You.

This day Father,

- may my mind be set on things above, not on things of this earth
- may I be a person of blessing
- may I encourage those who are tired and wearied by the cares of this world
- may I be given opportunity to love in deed and action and joyfully respond like Jesus
- may I be willing to be inconvenienced for the sake of the Gospel, and minister to others as if I were ministering to You

Father it is my desire that the imprint of Jesus be left behind wherever I go, whatever I encounter, whoever I meet. Accomplish this through me.

Father, I do not want to be one who follows You half-heartedly or out of convenience. May I always stand firm and not allow anything to move me away from You. I give myself wholly to Your purposes. Restore to me I pray, the joy of Your salvation that I might extend to others the same compassion, grace and forgiveness that You have lavished on me! Sustain me with a willing spirit that Your glory might be displayed through my life.

These things I ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Pray The Word