







Beautiful
Community

Table 6. What Builds Resilient Disciples? Meaningful Relationships

Percentage who strongly agree with each statement

	Prodigals/ Ex-Christians 	Nomads/ Unchurched 	Habitual Churchgoers 	Resilient Disciples 
The church is a place where I feel I belong.	5%	10%	43%	88%
There is someone in my life who encourages me to grow spiritually.	23%	31%	50%	85%
I am connected to a community of Christians.	7%	7%	33%	82%
When growing up, I had close personal friends who were adults from my church, parish, or faith community.	27%	31%	53%	77%
I admire the faith of my parents.	16%	29%	45%	72%
I feel emotionally close to someone at my church.	5%	6%	30%	64%

N = 1,514 US 18- to 29-year-olds who grew up as Christians
Source: Barna, February 2018



The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

Genesis 2v15-20 (ESV)

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Genesis 2v15-20 (ESV)

You were made for community.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1v27 (ESV)

God is one God, yet he reveals himself - unity in diversity - as Father, Son, and Spirit, without contradiction.

Barrier to community: Loneliness

Barrier to community: Anxiety

Barrier to community: Rejection

Barrier to community: The “Wish Dream”

Those who love their dream of a Christian community more than they love the Christian community itself become destroyers of that Christian community even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest and sacrificial. God hates this wishful dreaming because it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. Those who dream of this idolized community demand that it be fulfilled by God, by others and by themselves. They enter the community of Christians with their demands set up by their own law, and judge one another and God accordingly. It is not we who build. Christ builds the church.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

It takes faith to believe that you are fundamentally hardwired for community because we are made in the image of a loving, communal God.

The ultimate thing is that we build community not on our love but on God's love, because we do not really have that much love ourselves, and that is the real challenge of the religious life. It puts us in a position where sometimes natural community is very difficult. People are sent here and there, and often very incompatible people are thrown together. Groups of people who would never have chosen to be together in an ordinary human way find themselves living together. *It is a test of faith. It puts God's love to the test and it is meant to...* It isn't just a question of whether you are building community with people that you naturally like, it is also a question of building community with people that God has brought together. *What is tested in community is faith.*

- Eberhard Arnold

It takes faith to believe that you are fundamentally hardwired for community because we are made in the image of a loving, communal God.

Faith is paramount to step into the beautiful community that God intended.