

Made for More  
***“My Peeps”***  
January 30, 2022

Let's pray together.

Father in Heaven, I am thankful that you have revealed to us the truth about your love for us ...

... and that you have done that in the flesh,  
in the person of Jesus of Nazareth ...

... who lived, died, and rose again as our  
Savior and our Lord.

I pray in His name that you would use my words  
to help us become ...

... the people we want to be

... and the people you have made us to be.

Amen.

Good morning everyone! I'm glad you're with us today.

So, have you heard that Facebook Incorporated has a new name?

A couple of months ago, in a very slick video, founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced that Facebook was becoming "Meta."

As I watched, I was amazed at where technology is going and at the speed that it's going.

But, even beyond that, I was struck by the vision behind it all – the vision of a new virtual world called "The Metaverse."

So, I made a note to remind myself that, when I got around to doing this particular message, I wanted to show at least part of Zuckerberg's video (for reasons that I hope will become

obvious).

So, here it is. Check it out.

### **VIDEO: Intro to Meta**

Now, if you've seen this video, you know that it goes on for a bit describing the vision of the Metaverse and also the role that Zuckerberg hopes his company will play in creating it.

It really does sound amazing – and, honestly, a little scary.

But the part struck me most (and the reason I wanted to show you this) is when he said “the feeling of presence. This is the defining quality of the Metaverse. You're going to really feel like you're there with other people.”

By the way, as I was researching for this message, I discovered that the promise of “presence” in the Metaverse goes beyond

simply connecting with *people*.

Check out this amazing new product created for those who choose to live in this brave new world.

### **VIDEO: MetaPets Promo**

The idea of not having to clean up after a pet ...

The idea of not having to feel the pain of loss when your pet dies ...

That does sound pretty appealing, doesn't it?

But that's not the reason I showed you that clip or the other one.

The reason I showed you those clips is because of the inherent assumption that is driving not only MetaPets but the Metaverse itself.

**“Sometimes,” the announcer said, “you might**

**get lonely through all of that space.”**

That’s why, according to Zuckerberg, “the defining quality of the Metaverse [is] you’re going to really feel like you’re there with other people.”

Of all of the amazing wonders and incredible possibilities that the Metaverse promises to bring, the key selling point – the defining quality – is *relational presence and connection with others*.

Wow!

But why is that?

It’s because “the world” by itself – whether it’s the real physical world or a virtual one that we “create” through technology – isn’t enough.

**It’s because human beings were designed for relationship.**

And without relationships – particularly of the “human” kind – we will not become the people we were meant to be ... the people we want to be.

-----

... which, if you’re joining us today for the first time or the first time in a long time, is the purpose of the series we’re in, which we’re calling *Made for More: becoming the person you were meant to be*.

And two weeks ago, we started out by describing what that “more” is – who and what we were meant to be.

And if you missed that message you can watch, listen to, or read it by going to the media section of our app or our website.

And I hope you will because I think it will change the way you think about your life. Far

too many of us settle for far too little of who and what we're intended to be.

And then, last week, we talked about *The X-factor* – the first and most important (and most overlooked) of four things you need to do (and I need to do) if we're ever going to become the persons we were meant to be and want to be ...

**... which is to have a regular and ongoing connection with the God who made us.**

And we talked about ...

- What that means and how to go about it
- As well as how this church helps people do it.

In fact, that's our motto these days.

*You were made for more. We can help.*

And helping people connect with God is part of the reason we're here. It's actually one of our four "transformational objectives" ...

... one of four things we're intentionally trying to do for everyone who is part of this congregation.

And, again, if you missed that message, I encourage you to check it out.

## **Created to Relate**

Now, today we're going to look at our second "transformational objective" ... which has to do with relationships ... which is what I was talking about at the beginning of this message.

And the point I was making is that ...

- Human beings were designed for relationship.



- And without relationships – particularly of the “human” kind – we will not become the more we were made for.

Now, why would I say that? Why is that true?

It’s because, as we’ve been saying in this series, we have been created to reflect the One who created us.

**And that One, the God of the Universe, is relational.**

In fact, you may not realize it, but we just sang about that.

We believe in God the Father

We believe in Jesus Christ

We believe in the Holy Spirit

We, as Christians, believe in the Trinity – the One God who is (somehow) three.

Now, if you're not a Christian, I know that sounds kind of weird to you.

Actually, even if you *are* a Christian, it sounds kind of weird because it's describing a unique type of personhood – one that we've never seen nor encountered.

Of course, if you think about it ...

- *Why wouldn't* the God of the Universe be unique?
- Why wouldn't there be a different kind of personhood associated with a "being" who is greater than us – a Supreme Being?

**Anyway, point is ... God is relational and therefore we are relational.**

So, let's talk about that in a little more detail for few minutes because it's important to

understand.

Did you know that long before a human being or an angel was created, God existed in the ultimate community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Friendship, love, joy and caring freely flowed among them.

It's an incredible thought. It's an incredible vision.

And, at some point, the Three decided, "What we have together is so wonderful. Let's create beings who can share this with us and between themselves."

It's kind of like when a husband and wife decide to have children or adopt children: "we want our love to be shared with someone else."

**So, Moses writes that Father, Son and Spirit decided ...**

*“Let us make mankind in our  
image, in our likeness ...”  
Genesis 1:26 (NIV)*

And that’s what God did.

Of course, as we’ve seen each week in this series, being made in God’s image doesn’t mean that we *look like* God physically.

Instead, it means that our existence as humans is intended to reflect and to mirror God’s existence.

And since God is inherently relational within the being of God, we are also relational.

You might say that it’s in our spiritual DNA to be irresistibly drawn to communion and community with others, even in a virtual world of our own design!

Now, lest you think I’m reading more into this

than is there, if you read on a little further in the story, it quickly becomes apparent just how significant this need truly is.

Following each step of creation, Moses tells us that God said “wow, this is really good” – except for the last one.

After Adam was created and, at some point after he had begun to carry out the task that God had assigned him ...

**Moses tells us that ...**

*The Lord God said, “It is not good  
for the man to be alone.”  
Genesis 2:18 (NIV)*

Now, I’ve always wondered about this.

- Why would God put Adam in a situation that was not good?

- Why didn't God just go ahead and make Adam and Eve and maybe even a child and say, "OK, now the reason there are three of you is that there are three of us!"

"And we want *you* to reflect in *your* existence the kind of relationship that *we* share."

My hunch is that God chose not to do it that way because He wanted to make a point to Adam.

Because Adam was far more advanced than the rest of creation (in every way), it would have been very easy for him to think that he could do life alone.

So, I think maybe God just let him hang out to dry for a while until Adam finally said "Hey, God, this is all good stuff here, but I'm kind of lonely."

"I mean, these animals are pretty cool and all, but I can't really *do life* with them. They can't

feed my soul and I can't feed theirs."

**I think that's what Moses means when he writes that ...**

*For Adam no suitable helper was found. Genesis 2:20 (NIV)*

And I think The Father, Son and Spirit may have smiled at each other.

And then The Father said, "You know, you're right Adam. This is not a good thing. Why don't you lay down and take a nap for a little while?"

And while he slept, God created Eve so that both of them could begin to experience relationship and community and the fulfillment that would come from reflecting that part of God's image in their lives.

Now, as I always say whenever I talk about this story, I realize that not everyone believes this literally happened or that it was even *intended*

to be taken literally.

And, as I always say, you're welcome to have your opinion on that because whether or not it *literally* happened, the point is exactly the same.

And it's borne out every single day of your life and my life, and in the life of every single person who has ever lived or will ever live.

**The point is ... without relationships, we will never become the more we were made for.**

It's not good for the man (or woman) to be alone.

## **The Right Peeps**

Now, having said *that*, I should also say that everyone is wired differently in this area.

Some of us have a higher relational capacity and some of us have a lower relational capacity.



For example, my wife is here (high) and I am here (low) which caused a lot of tension earlier in our marriage ... until we figured out that it's OK to be different.

But the point still remains.

Whatever our capacity might be – whether it's high or low, without relationships we will never become the more we were made for. We'll never become the person we're meant to be.

Of course, having said that *again*, I should also say that I don't mean just *any* relationships because not every relationship is helpful.

**Truth is the quality of the people we spend time with eventually determines the quality of our lives.**

Every person you spend time with is either going to build you up or tear you down in some way.

Every person is going to *help* you become more of the more you were made for or they're going to *hinder* you.

King Solomon of ancient Israel (the person that the Bible calls the wisest man who ever lived – other than Jesus) ...

**... once put it like this ...**

*Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20 (NIV)*

If you hang out with people who are making good decisions and who are heading in a good direction, that will impact you in a positive way.

But if you hang out with people who are ...

- Negative about life

- Negative about God
- Negative about people
- Always the victim
- Always looking to play the system
- Never taking responsibility
- Never making an effort to improve themselves

If you hang out with people like that ... if your “peeps” are “fools” (as Solomon calls them), then you’re headed for trouble.

The Apostle Paul writing centuries later to Christ followers in Corinth expressed that same idea ...

**... when he wrote to them:**

*“Bad company corrupts good  
character.” 1  
Corinthians 15:33 (NIV)*

Turns out that Paul was actually quoting one of the well-known poets of that time<sup>i</sup> which means this isn't exactly spiritual or relational rocket science. It's common sense.

So, I think a good question to ask yourself is ...

- Who are you “walking with” that is helping you become the best version of yourself?
- Who in your relational universe is working *against* that purpose in your life?
- Who do you need to spend more time with?
- Who needs to get less time?

Now, there's no question that some of our

relationships just “are.” You have the family you have. You have the co-workers you have.

And you can’t really do anything about that.

But unless that is your *entire* life – unless all waking hours *must be* spent in their company for some reason – you and I *do* have choices.

You and I *can* choose where and with whom we spend our time outside of those circles. And we should for our own good!

Now, I know some of you are thinking, “wait a minute, Rick, didn’t Jesus hang out with ‘sinners’? Didn’t He hang out with people who we might call ‘bad company’?”

Yes, He did, absolutely. But ...

- He was also a lot more centered on what really matters than most of us are.

- And He didn't spend *all* of his time in time in those relationships.
- And He was the *influencer* not the "influencee".

So, just to be clear, I'm not saying we should shut ourselves off from "fools" (to use Solomon's terminology).

**I'm saying that the balance of our time needs to be invested in the company of people who are heading in the direction that we are.**

Now, here's where this gets a little personal and maybe even a little confrontational.

If you're saying, "I really want to become more of the person God intends for me to be, I want to be more of the more I'm made for, I want to be more like Jesus" ...

... and yet, you don't want to spend any time

around other people who are also heading in that direction, call me crazy ... but I think you might be kidding yourself. I think you might be deceiving yourself.

Because the truth is ... when you think about getting from where you are right now to where you want to be ...

- It will not happen without relationships with the right people.
- It will not happen without people who have permission to challenge you and encourage you.
- It will not happen without people who know your garbage and call you out when you wallow in it (that's called "truth").
- It will not happen without people who know your garbage and still love you anyway (that's called "grace").

## Church Peeps

Of course, the question is ... where are you going to find those kinds of people?

It's not easy. They don't grow on trees.

Where they *do* grow ... or, at least, where they're *supposed* to grow ... is in the fellowship called "church."

That's where they're *supposed* to be found, according to Jesus.

One of Jesus' friends, the Apostle John, tells us that on the night before his death, Jesus prayed a very interesting prayer.

**He said ...**

*"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will*



*ever believe in me because of their testimony.”*

In other words, “these guys and gals I’ve done life with for the past three-and-a-half years are going to tell their story.”

“It’s going to travel all over the world and down through the ages. And people are going to believe because of what they have experienced.”

“So, Father, I want to pray for *those* people” ... which, if you’re a Christian, is you (and me).

**Now, check out what Jesus prayed for us.**

*“My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father—that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us ...” John 17:20,21 (NLT)*

Jesus dreamed that when people made the

decision to believe in Him and follow Him ...

... they would develop relationships with one another that are so powerful and so unique that the best way to describe them is a “oneness that reflects the oneness of a triune God.”

That’s what “church” is supposed to be and do – at least, *part* of what “church” is supposed to be and do.

That’s why so many of the earliest Christian writings make so much of believers being connected with “one another.”

- *Teach* one another
- *Serve* one another
- *Pray* for one another
- *Bear* with one another
- *Carry* one another’s burdens
- And above all, *love* one another.

Church is to be a fellowship where people challenge and encourage each other; a fellowship where people speak truth to one another and offer grace to one another (just as Jesus does for us).

Let me show you just one example. This is my favorite one.

It's found in the 10th Chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, a letter written to group of demoralized Christians who were thinking about giving up and going AWOL from the faith.

**It says:**

*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. Hebrews 10:23 (NIV)*

In other words, we say we believe in Jesus, so ...

- Let's not swerve off of the road we're on in

following Him.

- Let's not go off into a ditch somewhere.
- Let's remember that He really does care about us.
- Let's remember that we're really not in this situation all by ourselves.

Now, here's *how* we're going to remember. Here's *how* we're not going to go off into a ditch.

*Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Hebrews 10:24 (NIV)*

Actually, the original Greek is a lot stronger. A more literal translation would be “let us think about how to *incite* one another.”

When you watch the Chiefs' game this

afternoon, at some point some of the players will be jumping around and raising their hands but it won't have anything to do with the game itself.

Instead, it will be directed at the crowd. They'll be *inciting* everyone to get loud.

That's the same imagery that's being presented here ... followers of Jesus inciting one another, jumping around, raising their hands saying ...

- Come on let's not quit! Let's not give up!  
Let's go!
- Let's be better than we are, better than the world tells us we need to be!
- Let's raise the bar instead of lowering it!
- Let's become so encouraging that just the sight of each other has the effect of

reminding us of who we are and why we're here!

That's what's supposed to happen among people who follow Jesus. That's what's "church" is supposed to be and do *relationally*.

Of course, the problem is ... we can't incite one another while sitting in a row like we are now.

And we can't ...

- *Serve* one another
- *Pray* for one another
- *Bear* with one another
- *Carry* one another's burdens
- And above all, *love* one another.

That's because ...

**Relationships don't happen in *rows*. They happen in *circles* ...**

... where you are face-to-face with other people who are *also* seeking to become more of the “more” they are made for.

**... which is why our second  
“transformational objective” – objective #2 –  
as a church is to help people join a group.**

... to go beyond just sitting in this auditorium or watching online – as important as that is.

And it *is* important. It’s part of transformational objective number one (which we talked about last Sunday): connect with God.

But to become the people we were meant to be and want to be, we have to go beyond that. We have to move from a row to a circle.

We have to join a group.

So, let’s talk about that for just a bit.

## Joining Up

Joining a group at North Heartland primarily happens in two ways.

- First there is joining a small group.
- Second is joining the church itself – the collective group – and becoming a formal member.

Now, I'm going to say more about that one near the end of the series, so I won't go into it right now other than to say that ...

**... church membership is a way of formally declaring to everyone else and to the pastors of this church that “I want to become more of the more that I was made for, and I want you to help me!”**

Of course, before you can *make* that kind of a declaration you need to know what this church is all about ...



... which is why, every month, we do this thing called *Orientation*.

It's a two-hour class, typically happens after the 11:00 service. We provide free lunch and free childcare.

If you go to the class, you'll learn about NHCC and also, what it means to be a member and how to join.

The next Orientation happens next Sunday, February 6<sup>th</sup>.

-----

Alright, now let's talk about small groups and how they work here at North Heartland.

And I'm going to be very honest about it.

Right now, *they're not working as well as we*

*would like* which is very concerning to me and the other pastors because ...

Moving from a row to a circle in order to engage in relationships with people who are heading in the same direction, who can challenge and encourage us with truth and grace, is so critical.

But COVID has done a number on our small groups – just as it has impacted so many other things.

My own group has struggled over the past year or so. In the beginning of the pandemic, we did Zoom meetings but, it just wasn't the same. We didn't feel nearly as connected, so we decided it not to do it.

And then, after we were able to start meeting again, Delta and Omicron happened which knocked us back.

Point being – small groups at NHCC have been

very challenging over the past two years.

But they still matter and we're trying to move forward, especially as COVID seems to be finally receding.

So, here's the deal.

- If you're already part of a small group, I want to encourage you to be faithful to it. Regularly, being in that circle matters. And not just to *you* but to the other people in the group with you.
- If you're a leader of a small group that is full, would you lead your group to consider multiplying and becoming two groups, so that more people can get in?
- If you're a leader of a group that has room and needs more people, would you talk to Rick Williams who is now leading that ministry?

I hear all the time, “our group needs more people” and yet, I know people and Rick knows people who aren’t in a group who would love to be in a group. So, contact him.

- Finally, if you’re new to North Heartland and you’re not in a small group ... or you’ve been around for a while and have never joined a group ...

**... I encourage you to check out Pivot, which is a mid-week group that anyone can join at any time.**

It’s a place to land temporarily until we can get you connected in a group or start a group with other folks who are also showing up to Pivot (which is what happened last fall).

Pivot is happening Thursday evenings here in the building. More details in the program or in the app.

Now, we're really sold on this idea of Pivot because it *is* such an easy entry point, and we plan to run it as often as possible throughout the year ...

... which is why we're trying to make it better and more engaging especially to folks who are in the 25-35 age group.

And if you're in that age group, we could *really* use your help.

**Before the next season of Pivot begins in March, we're running a focus group between services on February 27<sup>th</sup>.**

I know that's a long way off, but I want to get it on your calendar now because, again, we could use your help.

And while I'm speaking about younger people, I suppose I should also mention an opportunity for 18-25 year-olds.

**It's the "Food Fun & Friends" Young Adult Edition which is happening next Sunday evening at Parlor downtown ...**

... which is a really awesome place to hang out and enjoy great food, fun and friends.

## **Conclusion**

Now, over the years as a pastor, I've discovered that a lot of people understand the value of the kind of relationships I've been talking about.

In fact, they'll hear me or one of the other pastors talk about this subject and they'll sense an internal nudge from God: "hey, you should find out about that" or "you should get in a group."

But they *don't* do it because they think "it might not turn out like they're saying. I might not even *like* the other people who sign up."

And being an introvert, I understand that.

But I want to leave you with a thought. Someone has said ...

**A life of “oh wells” is better than a life of “what ifs.”**

If your worst fears materialize and whatever you sign up for turns out to be a bust, it's better to say ...

- Oh well, I gave it a try.
- Oh well, that didn't work.
- Oh well, maybe next time.
- Oh well, at least I put myself in a position where God could do something.

It's better to end up saying “oh well” than to be

saying ...

- What if I'd said yes to that invitation?
- What if I'd given that small group a try?
- What if I'd rearranged my priorities so I could show up regularly?

I mean, the worst that could happen if you went to Orientation or Pivot or Food, Fun & Friends is, after a couple of weeks or a couple of months, ...

... you might say, "Nice try but this isn't really helpful. It's not turning out like I thought it would. Oh well."

And that's better than saying "what if."

Of course, some people say, "Rick, you don't understand. You said church is supposed to be



...

- People who know your garbage and call you out when you wallow in it.
- People who know your garbage and still love you anyway.

“But in a lot of churches, people don’t do the second part. They only do the first. They call you out but there is no love. They tell you the truth but there is no grace.

“And I’ve experienced that.”

Listen, I get it, because I’ve experienced it, too. And I’m the lead pastor!

But I want to encourage you try again because when it “works right” there is nothing like the church.

There’s nothing like the relationships between

people who know Jesus and love Jesus and are trying to follow Jesus.

There's nothing like a culture built on truth and grace which is what we're trying to build here (and, in many ways, *have* built here).

And we want you to be part of it. And I hope you will.

Let's pray.

## Endnotes

---

i The Greek poet Menander