

NEXT STEPS: Intentionally Growing Three Key Relationships in Our Lives

We are relational beings. God didn't create us as machines; we are created in His image, which involves relating. Consider that God Himself is in relationship (the Trinity). The bottom line is that we are wired for relationships – but many of us struggle with time management. We either find little time for relationships or if we do make time, we're not always sure which relationships to invest in.

Here at Grace, we continue to fine tune and clarify our vision as a church. Together we seek to develop three key relationships in all of our lives. Let's look into these crucial relationships and please take the time to assess where you are.

First is a growing relationship with God.

One of the amazing aspects of Christianity is that God seeks to draw near to his creation (you and I). Jesus came and died for us to open the door to a close, personal relationship with the almighty God! Growing in our relationship with God has two primary aspects: our personal connection and our corporate connection.

Personally, as followers of Jesus, we foster closeness through regular time in God's Word, through prayer and through spiritual activities that enable us to authentically connect and grow in Him.

Corporately we come together for worship and growth. Each week we do this through our weekend gatherings to worship, to learn and to interact with each other at the services.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father through him." Colossians 3:16-17

So, take a minute and assess yourself in this area:

- Are you involved in regular "habits" of relating personally with God?
- Are you actively & regularly participating in the community of faith by showing up and worshipping authentically, opening yourself to God's leadership and teaching?
- Are you giving sacrificially?

The second key relationship is a growing relationship with other believers.

The instant we became followers of Jesus we were placed in the church. The community of Christ-followers is God's hand-designed environment for spiritual growth and relating with Him.

In our American version of Christianity, church can become a place we attend (like an event), but God's design is that church is a place we participate. Relating with other believers is critical to our growth! This relationship means we are intentionally looking for opportunities to act in love toward others, to share with others and be teachable, to serve others and to work as a team.

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deed. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25

What a great picture of the church in action!

Take a minute to assess yourself in this second key relationship:

- Are you involved in a small group with other believers where you can share life and grow in God's Word?
- What types of "investments" are you making in other Christians' lives?
- In what areas are you currently serving?
- How are you allowing yourself to be influenced for the good by others?

The church is about people, not programs – but relationships don't just happen, we need to be intentional.

The third key relationship is a growing relationship with unbelievers.

Jesus continually calls His church to be His hands and feet. We are called to be salt and light in our world. We need to intentionally grow in relationships with unbelievers. The reality, however, is that many of us get so involved in church activities that we find little time to foster these relationships.

At Grace we want to simplify ministry so that each of us is freed to build into all three of the key relationships. This third relationship may be the most challenging for us.

Begins by regularly praying for people who don't know Jesus. Move from there to investing relationally in others' lives by being a trustworthy, selfless friend to those outside of faith. And finally, invite others to know Jesus. This can be accomplished in a number of ways.

Sometimes it's about sharing your story of faith and change and inviting a response. Sometimes it's inviting friends to a weekend service at Grace where they will hear about Jesus followed up with a lunch or coffee. Sometimes it's choosing an event or specific message series to invite a friend to.

"Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:5-6

But again, the bottom line is that it doesn't just happen, we must be intentional!

So, assessment time:

- Who specifically are you praying for?
- What relationships are you investing in?
- Who have you invited in the last 6 months?
- What other avenues are you seeking to represent Jesus (local and global mission efforts and service)?

As a church we want to simply have each person focus in on these three key relationships in an intentional way. Some of us may look at these and realize that we are spending an inordinate amount of time on the 2nd relationship (at the expense of one of the other relationships) – for example by being involved in several Bible studies, groups and activities. We may need to make adjustments to build into our relationship with God; or maybe spend more time in intentionally investing in people who don't know Jesus.

The Christian life is all about choices and the choices we make reflect the values we hold. At Grace, it's our hope that we will all commit to building the 3 key relationships we see outlined in Scripture in an ever-increasing and intentional way. God has amazing things in store for us as a church – let's relate well!