

C2 Relationships Connectedness

<http://OakbrookChurch.com>

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If only I could find an audio version of the Bible as narrated by Marcel the Shell...

Today's topic is RELATIONSHIPS.

Before we go any further I want to admit that **I have relational issues!**

I tend to be more comfortable in a room of **non-Christians** more than Christians.

I struggle with people who think and act like **politics** is the hope of the world.

I struggle with **narrow-minded** people.

I think there's a special room in hell just for people who send **untrue alarmist** emails.

Generally speaking the longer I'm with people, the more I wear down. In the quasi words of Jerry Maguire:

"You **deplete** me..."

I'm going back to Haiti in Nov. And in the evenings, around 8 or 9 –after we've all been together since 6am---when most everyone else will be playing cards...

I'll be in my **dark bedroom** with headphones on listening to Pomplamoose or Mozart wondering how in the world they can **stand to still be around each other ;-)**

It's not that I don't love and enjoy people—I do! But **I have relational issues.**

I have small group issues. I struggle in a larger group where conversations don't go very deep. I feel more natural in a smaller group that feels more intimate and candid.

There are guys like Dave Horraine who can be around people ALL DAY and it's good with his soul! I was in Haiti with him last time and he'll smile ear to ear at you from 6am to 10pm...

I love people, but I need breaks.

To love people, I need some time to **be alone** to **recharge** my batteries.

My wife Sandra gets her batteries recharged by being around people.

(SELAH)

I wanted to start here because when "people people" hear the topic is RELATIONSHIPS, their **soul increases by a third.**

And at the same time...the introverted, not-so-social, non-relationally-energized... wonder **how much longer til lunch ;-)**

And if you're **not** a people-person, you may have secret dreams about a small group that looks, a little like this one:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMyTMTmJU6E>

In all seriousness, everyone in this room is **not** an **extroverted people person**. And that's OK. In fact, it's not only OK—it's by GOD'S DESIGN.

Christianity is **not** a way of life where everyone becomes the same. (repeat)

In authentic Christianity, as we pursue C2, we become the **unique people** that God created us to be.

Contemporary theologian John Ortberg writes about the process of becoming Christ-Centered in his book, "The Me I Want to Be." He writes,

"You don't just become **holier**. You become **you-ier**. You will change; God wants you to become a 'new creation,' But 'new' doesn't mean **completely different**; instead, it's like an old piece of furniture that gets completely restored to its intended beauty."

—The Me I Want to Be by John Ortberg

<http://tinyurl.com/2er5e99>

So, let's start here:

We all have varying degrees of relational capacity. But we are all designed by God, to live a connected life. (repeat)

Timeout! I'm going **rogue** on the programming team and the small group curriculum. I want to scratch the word "relationships" and swap it out for the word "CONNECTEDNESS."

Here's why (Tinker Toy example)

I can have these parts in **relationship** to each other. In this case, this hub is 6 inches away from this stick. They are **in relationship to one another**.

Or we can put these two pieces together and now they're **connected**. In connectedness there's a significant bond.

It's one thing for me to know my neighbor who's not into God. It's another thing if he and I have a **connection**—a bond.

So when you get to group this week, **cross out** the word "**relationships**" and write in the word "**connected**."

(SELAH)

Alright, so we all have **varying degrees** of relational capacity. But we are **all designed** by God, to live a **connected life**.

There is **no such thing** as an **isolated Christ follower**.

"Yeah, but I can watch church on TV or my laptop."

"Yeah but I can grow in the Bible by myself."

"Yeah but I'm painfully shy—God's ok with me being by myself...."

It was the great musical "prophets," The Human Beinz who said, "No-no no, no no, na no-no-no." ;-)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxtJoGdujYo>

This Scripture I'm going to share---it's one of my **"duct tape" Bible verses**. It fits every talk, and almost every conversation.

The Pharisees were the Jews who eventually crucified Christ—and were really into biblical rules—they had over 600 of them. A Pharisee asked Jesus,

"Oh, so like, what is the **mother load** of all the religious rules? Which ONE is it?"

Jesus replied, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.

Matthew 22:37-40 nlt

So Jesus says: **love God and love people**.

Which means, I have relational issues—but I don't get to **opt out** of the connected life.

People-people and **non-people-people** gotta lovingly be connected to people.

The biblical proof text that we can't be Lone Ranger Christians is God himself—who lives in community within Himself. He is **God the Father**, the **Holy Spirit** and **Christ** all together, yet one. He is **connected** within the 3 forms of Himself.

The biblical proof text for connectedness, is the entire Bible. Everyone is connected! Adam is by himself for about 2 ½ minutes before God says,

"Huh...this ain't good...TA DA!...Eve. Curvy. Good."

Christ himself does His entire earthly ministry **connected**. Connected with The **Twelve** and a closer connection with **3**: Peter, James & John.

(SELAH)

Open up our Bible or Smart Phone to Ephesians ch 2:19-22. I've been in a rich C2 passages this week that I want to share.

(Written to Christ followers.)

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners.

(Gentiles means “non-Jews”)

You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22 nlt

When it says together we are **building a house**, it’s **not** a physical house.

It’s God’s people—US—being **built up**--an ekklesia as Mark taught last month—a movement—a gathering of God’s people.

Then the word “built” is an action word. We have to be **formed**.

We have to be **“put together”** on the foundation of Christ himself.

Built means there’s **work** to be done. Work **we need to do** ---disciplines: meditation on Scripture, praying, listening to God etc.

And there’s the forming **work** in us that **only God can do**. He restores us like an old piece of furniture to our intended beauty.

Love this phrase—**“We are carefully joined together.”**

We are CONNECTED. Just like we can connect Tinker Toys and form a structure, Christ followers are connected to make up the fully functioning far-reaching movement--ekklesia!

And it says we are **“becoming a holy temple for the Lord.”**

Becoming is that great word that means we are all **in-process**.

This phrase captures the C2 journey we’re all on.

C2 is the process of us becoming a holy temple for the Lord!

And notice two key concepts in this passage:

It is all in CONNECTION with each other,
and CONNECTION with Christ.

Paul says to us, (my paraphrase)

“We’re designed **to build each other up** into the church—ekklesia-- through Christ—we’ll all get there TOGETHER! No lone wolves---**brothers and sisters in arms** within the **arms of Christ!**”

Like Niko Gruber would say, **“BA-BAM!!”**

So let's read this passage together, now that we better understand it:

"So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit." Ephesians 2:19-22 nlt

(SELAH)

Let's look in our Bibles & Smart Phones at Philippians 2:7-8

Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the **humble** position of a slave
and was born as a human being.
When he appeared in human form,
he **humbled** himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.
Philippians 2:7-8 nlt

(History lesson)

Before the crucifixion, the idea of humility was a **negative trait**. It meant **weakness**. There was nothing positive about humility.
Before Christ, the world only valued **might** and the ability to **wield power**.

Never before in the history of the world had Someone so powerful reduced Himself to such a lowly position for the redemption of the lowest unworthy people in the world.

But at the cross, the **meaning** of the word "humility" was forever **reversed**.

Now humility is **noble**.

Attractive.

Compelling.

It **breaks down barriers** and begs us to **lean in**.

It is a **universal virtue to aspire to**. (Hold that thought for 30 secs.)

We've been talking about **connectedness**. It sounds like a **simple** word. But do we really **do it**? How do we **connect**?

Connect with **unsaved neighbor**?

With our **small group**?

With a **mentor**?

With **someone we're mentoring**?

Not with **right answers**.

Not with appearing "**together**."

We connect through humility.

We connect by letting people look **behind the mask**.

We connect by letting them see what's **out of control**, what's **not** together.

(SELAH)

I want to show an example of how to connect.

This is my journal entry from Sept. 21, 2011.

I think I'm broken.

I went to Dr. Haendiges' medical weight loss office and had blood work done and an EKG.

I felt kind of sober, almost sad during the EKG. The super-nice nurse shaved three spots out of the rug on my chest and attached numerous disks on my torso. Then in modern Frankensteinian fashion hooked wires from my torso to the little brilliant machine on the sterile counter.

Leaning back in the chair, looking at the ceiling tiles and dusty return-air vent, I felt sober. Maybe like an alcoholic going to an AA class. I wasn't sad and I wasn't happy.

Now I'm writing this in my church office. And I feel sad. Emotionally heavy.

Ronda kindly asked me if I was ok since she knew I'd been at the doctor. I told her my little story. When I began, she leaned in and talked quieter.

I wanted to say, "It's ok, it's not a secret," but I didn't. I felt weird as I was telling her.

I think what I'm feeling is failure. I think it's, "I can't do it, so I need to pay someone to help me."

Now, had someone told me that exact same sentence I'd say,

"That's great! You know God didn't design life to be a solo sport—we're designed to need each other." And that is true.

But perhaps my sadness is bruised pride.

As much as I want to be humble, I have pride issues. I don't really want to need Dr. Haendiges. But, I need her.

The other half of this sadness is failure. I have failed at maturity as it pertains to my physical health. I have blown it. This too, is a pride-kicker.

I'm really uncomfortable as hell when I feel weak. I loathe it.

I would so much rather live out of my strength...

And as I wrote that last sentence, I realized the spiritual ramifications of it: God wants me to live out of His strength. In my weakness, He is strong. Sobering.

I can't decide if this is my own little private weight loss journal or if I'll bare my soul on my blog. If I go public with this, do me a favor?

Don't say, "Way to go," or "I'm proud of you."

Why? Today I'm sitting in this place of failure and brokenness. And I need to. I need to feel that. At least right now.

So just maybe say, "I'm praying for you," or "I'm here for you. I'm with you."

If I'm honest, the other thing is I'm scared of failing at this.

I'm out there now—trying something that I'm banking on to regain physical health. But I'm not so scared that it kept me from starting this and not too scared to be a little excited about this. That sounds like hope peeking in.

Welcome to day 1.

(SELAH)

So now, whether you know me or not, you probably feel **connected** with me.

Not because I brought some **brilliant piece of theology** or **waxed eloquently** about Scripture. But because I let you see **behind the scenes**. I **dropped my mask**.

It's so difficult. I keep thinking that humility is going to get easier but it doesn't.

Reading that 2 minute piece of my journal was harder than putting together this entire 30 minute talk...

Funny thing. When deciding to put it on my blog, I wasn't feeling it, so I didn't post it. But when I was trying to figure out how to tell you how to create connection, God said, share it *now*. Hard...

I don't know how your groups are going during this C2 series. But if you want to take them to a new place, drop your mask. Show up this week and share a piece of yourself that's **not** together, and see what happens.

Humility in a group is like **dysfunctional show-n-tell**.

It's sharing something we're **not** proud of.

Something we need **support** with.

Something we need **prayer** for.

Something we need God to **redeem**.

Remember, we're like an old piece of furniture that God completely restores to its intended beauty. Humility—admitting we need restoration-- is the path to God restoring us.

SELAH

Christ, who had the power to call down heaven's armies...allowed Himself to be stripped naked and to be nailed to a cross.

The most powerful One who's ever walked this earth...

abdicated his **strength** for **humility**...

so that the least among us could know **grace** and a **new way** of **eternal living**.

Christ humbling himself with his death on a cross...made a way for all of us to know God....know forgiveness...know restoration to our intended beauty...

And just as the Holy Spirit was **made available** in Christ's **death**.

Mysteriously, the Holy Spirit is often **made available** when we **kill our pride** and offer our **humble brokenness** to **each other**.

Humility between you and me paves the path for the Holy Spirit.

And without the Holy Spirit, we'll never be C2 (Christ Centered). And without the Holy Spirit we'll never be the true expression of the church.

(SELAH)

If you're tired of doing life **apart from God**.

If you're tired of trying to be **strong**, be "together" and have **all the answers** when **you know you don't**.

If you believe God is who He says he is.

Then I offer you to believe these words God has written to you in **Romans**:

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. 3:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. 6:23

For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." 10:13

I invite you to ask Christ into your life today. If you want God to take away your sins and lead your life, pray these words with me:

"Lord, I believe you are who you say your are.

I believe Jesus, your sinless Son died on a cross to forgive my sins; past, & future.

(In your own words ask Him to forgive you?)

Lord, help me follow you the rest of my days.

Help me to look to you and your Word to lead my life.

Lord, help me surrender my life to you. Lead me. Amen.”

If you prayed that prayer with me, I invite you to meet me back there (back of auditorium)—I’d love to give you a Bible, encourage you or pray for you. When this song starts I’ll head that way and you can too.

This song echoes the idea of Ephesians 2:

“Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.”

It’s chorus is “In the shelter of each other, we will live—we will never walk alone.” (*Shelter*, by Jars of Clay) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bcgj-Jbl2RY>