Why Should I Care Series

Why Should I Care about Building Friendships?

January 12, 2012

(All Yellow Highlighted Phrases should be on the PPT and handout. Blue phrases are those on PPT but should not on the handout)

On, Monday, January 6th, the Journal and Courier published an article with the headline-“’This is the place to come’-stuck travelers praise accommodations”

The referent of “that place” for stuck travelers was the emergency shelter-Faith Community Center.

The individual who made that comment, Nycole Harris, was making a journey from Atlanta to Chicago by way of Faith Community Center—Due to snowmaggedon.

Her full comments were, “We enjoyed our night. They really helped us a lot. Shower, excellent. Clean towels. They made sure we had plenty of snacks. This is the place to come. They’re going to take care of you.”

First, I want to thank all of you who serve in making both FE and FW community shelters available.

Second, can you believe that the headline in the local newspaper was Faith Community Center….the place to come!??”

God has given us a great example of what this year is all about—**“Loving Our Neighbor”**

The first Sunday of the year is a time when Pastor Viars introduces our annual theme through a message entitled, “Why are we here, Where are we going and How do you fit in?”

Obviously last Sunday, was Indiana’s snowpocalypse and P. Viars made a strategic decision to hold off on preaching that sermon because only a small portion of our church would have heard that important message.

He will preach that sermon next week.

He was also going to introduce a new series for us entitled “Why should I care.”

The question is regarding our neighbors…

Such as

Why should I care about building friendships?

Why should I care about the elderly?

Why should I care about Racial Reconciliation?

Why should I care about the Poor?

Why should I care about the Hurting?

Loving our neighbors….why should I care about each different category of neighbor?!

There are many things to care about in life.

Why should I care about my neighbor?

As always, we will not find answers to why should we care in ourselves….we will find it in God’s Word.

Today we are considering, **Why Should I Care about Building Friendships?**

Have you ever said or thought to yourself something negative about friendships…things like…

* I don’t have any friends.
* I don’t need friends
* I’m not in the “in group” anywhere I go
* Life would be great except for the people
* I will pull myself up by my own bootstraps
* Nobody cares about me.
* I’m a loner and I like it that way
* Its just better for me to do everything then allow others to participate
* It doesn’t really matter if I know my neighbors
* It doesn’t really matter if anybody in the church knows me, I just come for the semons—at least I’m in church
* I’m not a hospitable person. Hospitality is not my spiritual gift.

If so, then you and I need to hear the Word of God today.

Turn with me to Genesis Chapter 1:26-27 first. That is on page 1 of the front section of the Bible in the chair in front of you. We will be going to more passages of Scripture than usual because of the nature of study this morning.

There is not one passage that gives us all the answers to the question of “Why Should I Care about Building Friendships?”

In one sense today we are synthesizing the message of Scripture on this topic.

We are doing an exercise in systematic theology today as opposed to simply developing the meaning of one passage.

Gen 1:26-27 (Notice the words I emphasize for today’s study)

 **26** Then God said, “Let ***Us*** make man in ***Our*** image, according to ***Our*** likeness; and let ***them*** rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; ***male and female*** He created ***them***.

Now turn over a page to Gen 2:7-10

 7 Then the **Lord God formed man** of dust from the ground, and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**; and ***man* became a living being**. 8 The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. 9Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **10** Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.

Now please turn to the very end of your Bible and look for Rev 21:1-7, pg 201 in the back section, the NT. This is referring to the end of all times.

**1**Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. 2And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, ***the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them,***and ***they shall be His people***, and ***God Himself will be among them***, 4and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

Finally, look over a column to Rev 22:

**1**Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from **the throne of God and of the Lamb**, 2in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve *kinds of* fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 There will no longer be any curse; and ***the throne of God and of the Lamb*** **will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads**. 5 And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine **them; and they will reign forever and ever**.

Now, take a step back and consider what you have read hear.

You have seen a glimpse of God creating and you have seen a glimpse of what the end of all things will be.

There is plurality there in both God and people…multiple people in both passages.

There is much to these passages, but I think if we ask the question, “Why should I care about building Friendships.” I think one clear answer is

1. ***God Is a Relational God (Gen 1:26-27, 2:7-10; Rev 21:1-4; 22:1-5)***

What do you notice in the beginning about the solitary God and the solitary man...there is not simply solitariness! There is plurality in unity.

What do you notice in the end (revelation) about the solitary God and the solitary...there is not simply one person, there are a lot of people!

In the beginning God says, **“Let us”** and he creates Adam and Eve---Male and female. He creates **them**

In the end God says, the throne of God ***and*** the lamb will be among **them**…

The fact that God is a relational God is

Demonstrated most clearly by…

1. **His trinitarian nature which makes Him the only properly functioning community**

Much has been written about what the scriptures mean by Gen 1:26, When God says, “Let us” plural make man in “our” plural image.

This is not a clear passage regarding God’s Trinitarian nature, but it at least allows for the concept of something about God is plural.

In Revelation we see, the scriptures referring to the throne of God and of the lamb…two distinct persons…

You may say, Pastor, you have already lost me.

Let me just mention the concept of Trinity by way of reminder and for those new to Scripture.

As God revealed himself progressively through scripture, God shows himself to be one god, one divine being, that exists eternally in three persons—God the Father, God the son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament, that was not as clear to his people.

However, when Jesus of Nazareth, came to carry out God’s redemption plan, God revealed even more about Himself. God is one God that exists in three persons.

And in a passage like **Matthew 3:16-17**, all three persons of the trinity are clearly present

**“After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased**”

There we have God the Father speaking from Heaven, God the Son being baptized, and God the Holy Spirit descending upon Him.

Now, if you want to begin understanding more about the Trinity, I would encourage you to consult a Systematic Theology text book, like Wayne Grudem’s Systematic Theology.

Today, our goal is not to develop a systematic theology of the Trinity but only mention it as the foundation to understand this….If God is one God and three persons what inherently exists in the Godhead—Relationships!!!!

There is plurality in God’s unity.

That right there is the basis for why God created more than one person in this world…

He is a God who exists in relationships and therefore….you do also.

Furthermore, can you ever imagine Jesus the Son fighting with God the Father? How about the Holy Spirit throwing a tantrum because He doesn’t want to go to Cold Siberia to convict someone there…

God’s Trinitarian relationship is the only perfectly functioning community filled with God’s righteousness.

There is no argument

There is no fighting

There is no divorce

There is no sin in that community of the three!

In the God head is the perfect community

Simply put if you say, “I have no need for relationships.”

Then you say, “I am rejecting the essence of my creator.”

In the God head is the perfect relational community and guess what? he invited man into that fellowship when He…

1. **His creation of Adam and Eve in His image in relationship to Him**

Adam and Eve were created in His image which includes the capacity for relationship first with Him and then with each other.

The contrast of different characteristics of God is demonstrated by contrasting Gen 1-2

In Gen 1, God speaks without touching and things happen. God could have been only the distant impersonal God, separated from His creation but…because He is not….

In Gen 2 God touches…He forms Adam, and He breaths onto Adam, and He plants Adam, and He takes from his rib to make the woman.

These two chapters together show us that First God made man share in relationship with His perfect community and then with a partner Eve

Finally, God’s relational nature is seen by

1. **His creation of the church, a community within which He dwells**

**Rev 21:7 “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband, And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people and God Himself will be among them.”**

The church is called the bride of Christ throughout the NT.

Notice we have a “husband and wife” here, like we had in Genesis with Adam and Eve.

The husband here is Christ, the bride is the Church.

That picture in revelation is when the bride, the church, is perfectly purified from sin so there is no more relational problems and we enjoy the perfect relationships found in the Trinity to which God has invited us to partake.

No we are practicing and being refined for that day…

Also please notice **John 15:11-15**

Listen to what the head of the church, Jesus, God the Son, says to the church’s first leaders—the apostles

**John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that one lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.**

The 2nd person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, God the Son, calls the calls the first leaders of the church, “friends.”

And He wanted them to function as He Himself, has lived with them in relationships…to the point of joyful friendship…

So, if the question is

Why should I care about building friendships?

Then the first and primary answer is because God is a Relational God

The second answer is

1. **You Were Made to Be in Relationship**

A fish is made for water

A cheetah is made to run

An eagle is made to soar

And humans are made for relationships with God and others.

Think through the joys and challenges of earthly relationships for a moment.

I bet you deepest joys have been in relationships.

What are some of the **Blessings of relationships**?

* **Love and support—Prov 17:7 “A friend loves at all time, and a brother is born for adversity”**
* **Speaking Truth—Prov 27:6 “Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”**
* **Growth—Prov 27:7 “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”**
* **Encouragement—Prov 27:9 “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man’s counsel is sweet to his friend.”**
* **Companionship—Gen 2:18 “It is not good for man to be alone”**

Now…What are the challenges…I won’t list those but I bet your deepest hurts have come only through one venue…relationships…

Those challenges include, divorce (the death of a relationship), division, anger, separation, disloyalty, indifference, gossip, slander, exclusion.

In all of these we are tempted to go it alone and say, I don’t need anyone. We are tempted to put up a fortress of protection that let’s no one in.

So there are joys and pains in earthly relationships….

We have to navigate earthly relationships carefully

We can neither idolize them by making them the end of what we are living for when we experience the joys. (apply to smothering friendships)

But neither can we withdraw from them in fearful self-protection to isolate ourselves…so….(apply to loners)

So,

1. **The blessings of earthly relationships remind us of ultimate joys in relationship with God.**
2. **The challenges of earthly relationships remind us of our need for grace in relationships**

[When I was growing up of my main heart issues was wanting other people’s attention and approval. I would do everything I could in sports, or in school or socially to gain approval. I wanted to be the kid everyone liked… why did I want people to like me. As I grew and later became a follower of Christ I learned that I wanted something from them. I wanted their approval and attention to feed my ego. I wanted to use other people for my enjoyment. So they would think about me as highly as I thought about me, and then we together can just have great conversations about how wonderful I was.

Have you ever been there, when you want someone else to view you a certain way, to interact with you a certain way, so that you feel good about yourself. So that you get something from them that you believe you need.

So often that is what relationships become …a vehicle for our own exaltation and pleasure, and we are reminded that we need grace because of that.

And the goal of relationships is not to get what we think we need.

1. **The goal of earthly relationships then is not to have friends but to be the kind of friend that Christ was to us.**

[Apply to those who say, “I don’t have any friends.” Learn how to be a friend here]

Rather than focusing your thoughts and energy on the friends you don’t have, consider how God would want you to grow in being a friend to others.

Someone may say, well no one initiates conversations with me, or invites me to do things…I think the proper response is rather than long for that from someone else, seek to be that to someone else. Initiate conversations with others, invite others to do things.

You may say, that will stretch me, some may reject me…and that is ok, because the goal is not for us to get something from them, but to model Christlikeness. -2 Cor 5:9…we want to be pleasing to God.

What does that look like? Well be the kind of friend that draws out other people and learns about them rather than talking about yourself. (prov 20:5)

Be the kind of friend that is more concerned with another person’s relationship with Jesus than what that person thinks about you.

Be the kind of friend that remembers details about someone and brings them up in conversation indicating that the person means something to you rather than just a person you happen to be talking to in order to kill some time.

Don’t focus on what you are or are not getting from people, but what kind of friend God wants you to be.

If the question is Why should I care about building friendships?

The first answer is because God is a relational God

The second answer is because You are made to be in relationships

The third answer is

1. **You were not made for isolation from God or others (Gen 2:18; 3:24; 4:14-16; Ps 22:1)**

Gen 2:**18**Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him

Aloneness was a problem

Look across the page to Gen 3:24 “So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Isolation from God was a problem

Look at the story of Cain, the first human murderer

Gen 4:13 “Cain said to the Lord, ‘My punishment is too great to bear! Behold you have driven me this day from the face of the ground and from your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me”

Cain was driven from the Lord, separate from the Lord….he was to be a vagrant, separated from the community of God and God’s people….That was not a good thing!

Do you know what Separation, Aloneness from God is called? Death?

Do you know what Separation, Aloneness from God for eternity is called? Death in Hell forever.

Aloneness from God is Death and Hell

If you want aloneness, isolation, from God and God’s people, then what you are saying is I want to be separated from the only perfectly functioning, life giving community of the Godhead…

Participation with God in His perfect community of the Trinity is life.

Finally listen to Psalm 22:1—“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

We know these words that were expressed by David during a great trial in his life where he was not feeling the presence of God.

These words foreshadowed Jesus Christ’s ultimate suffering when he bore ***aloneness*** from God and from every human who forsook Him. Jesus Christ took the aloneness so you wouldn’t have too. (Share the Gospel)

This is so rich of theology that shows us…

1. **Aloneness is a condition needing a solution**
2. **Aloneness is considered a curse**

(note I didn’t say “singleness” is a curse and marriage is the solution ☺!)

If the question is Why should I care about building friendships?

The first answer is because God is a relational God

The second answer is because You are made to be in relationships

The third answer is because You were not made for isolation

The fourth answer is

1. **God Gives Hope for Growing Relationships Now.**

I would like to show you why I believe there is hope for relationships now.

If I were to show you one of the most dysfunctional churches with strife, division, divorce, lawsuits, incest, and immorality, but yet, God still wanted them to grow in relationships…to keep them in redemptive relationships so they learned to love like Christ. That would give hope right? – (OXY Clean)

Look at

I Cor 1:9-10 “God is faithful through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ as Lord. (Thus the Corinthians, were partakers in the perfect community—not of Corinth—but of the Godhead….now watch) Now I exhort you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Corinth was the worse if I might make a judgment call about the NT churches….But there was hope for them…that means there is hope for you in completing your sanctification by being involved in growing relationships—the blessed ones and the messy ones…

Now let’s talk practically for a while as we conclude..

If you have not been made part of the divine Community of the Trinity, your first step is to settle your first relationship with your Creator.

If you do have a relationship with your Creator and Redeemer, how do you need to grow in relationship. Remember isolation is not an option for a child of a relational God!

 Here are a few take away this morning.

* Make it your goal to meet at least one new person each Sunday.

That is a good goal for each day as you attend various events, it can be very easy to just focus on your tasks, and not realize that God may want you to build a relationship with someone for His glory and your good.

* Consider taking an FCI class with the goal of getting to know someone better, whether you invite them or meet them there.

Be the kind of person who doesn’t just look to talk to people you already know because that is comfortable and enjoyable to you, but look to always have room for one more friend.

* Schedule time dedicated to relationship building

Maybe it’s having someone over once a month, or inviting a few folks that just started coming to your ABF to grab a bite after church.

Pick a time and pick some people, don’t over think it, just let it become a more regular part of your everyday life.

* Lastly, seek to go deeper with your friends you have known longer.

Ask yourself, do I know what my friends struggle with on a regular basis. Do I know how their walk with the Lord is…”Ask” never assume because someone smiles and jokes that everything between them and God is ok. Are you willing to find out and pray and encourage them and bear those burdens with them?

…Because you care about relationships…Since God is a relational God and He made you in his image, not to be isolated but relational, and He provides Hope for growing in your relationships now. --------- Let’s pray