

## Connect With Others – Various Scriptures

Acts 2:42-47; We started a mini-series last week called **Fully Engaged**

Talking about what it means to be a fully engaged follower of Christ; What it looks like to be *all in*

And found that the first part is to *go to church* (**Review**); Far too many people fail to give church its proper place in their lives; But . . .

### Fully engaged believers make church a priority

They don't neglect meeting together as is *the habit of some* (Heb 10:24-25)

If the doors of the church are open, and it's at all possible, they're there; They go

And do so for 3 main reasons:

#### To obey the Lord

Even when they don't feel like it

#### To learn about the Lord

That is, to *let the word of Christ dwell in* [them] *richly* (Col 3:16); And *to hear instruction and be wise* (Prov 8:33)

#### To worship the Lord

*Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in* [their] *hearts to God*

They make church a priority, b/c *worship* is a priority (**Summary**)

That was last week – fully engaged believers go to church

➤ This week, it's connecting with others

### Fully engaged believers connect with others

Far from thinking they're an island unto themselves, they link with one *another*

They engage in what the Bible calls *fellowship* – belonging together in mutual partnership; Like it says in Acts 2:42 regarding the *first* believers

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship* – the connection and partnership with other believers, for the work of ministry

*They devoted* themselves to it; Meaning, they were *fully engaged*; And we s/b too

#### • Just like the early church (Acts 2:42-47)

B/c Luke goes on in v44 to say that – *all who believed were together and had all things in common*; IOW they were connected

And v46 says that – *day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts*

Once again, they were *connected*; Serving as an example for us

Fully engaged believers connect with others just like the early church, and . . .

#### • Just like the apostles (1 Thess 2:8)

One of whom, the Apostle Paul, says in **1 Thess 2:8** to the church in Thessalonica . . .

*So, being affectionately desirous of you, we* [that's Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy] *were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

Their ministry wasn't just about sharing the gospel, but sharing their *lives*; Connecting with those who received it; Their brothers and sisters in Christ

And later on in Ephesus, Paul did the same thing; Saying in **Acts 20:18** . . .

*You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia . . . teaching you in public and from house to house (20)*

He lived among them, and taught in their homes; That's connecting with others\*\*\*\*\*

And something we should do as well, just like the apostles

And 3<sup>rd</sup> . . .

#### • Just like Jesus (Mk 3:13-14)

You see, Jesus didn't only preach to the masses, and interact with the crowds – but he *connected* with the few, the 12

Like in **Mk 3:13-14** where it says that – *He went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired* [those with whom he wanted to connect on a more personal basis], *and they came to him. [14] And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him* [connect with him] *and he might send them out to preach.*

He didn't just preach to the masses or interact with the crowds – he connected with 12; 12

And within *that* group, he focused on 3

**Mk 9:2** says – *Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.*

You want to do what Jesus did? Or what Jesus would do? Connect with others\*\*\*\*\*

Just like the early church, just like the apostles, and just like Jesus

#### • B/c that's God's design (Rom 12:4-5)

Fully engaged believers connect with others, b/c that's God's design

Rom 12:4-5 – *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, [5] so we, though many, are one body in Christ* [connected], *and individually members one of another.*

Spiritually speaking, we're about as connected as we can be in the church – the community of believers; B/c we're a part of the same spiritual entity

We're *one body*, and *individually members one of another*; We're connected to one another; That's God's design

And it's ours to apply; Instead of just leaving it in the classroom, or on the page – we should live it out

*Members one of another* should be a functional *reality* not a pleasant platitude

Connected as we are spiritually, we should connect with one another physically; As in face to face, side by side, shoulder to shoulder

No wonder Paul says later on (**Rom 15:5-6**) – *May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, [6] that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

God's *desire* is harmony and glory, while his *design* to make it happen, is fellowship and connection

And fully engaged followers apply it – they connect with others (**Summary**)

- But that's not all; It's not just obedience for obedience sake; There are also benefits;  
Just like the *vast* majority of God's commands  
Most often, when God tells us to do something, or not do something, he does so for our own good – his glory and our good

And in this case, it starts with encouragement; Connect w/ others . . .

- **For encouragement (Rom 15:1-2)**

It's the very thing Paul tells us to do in 1 Thess 5:14 – *Encourage the fainthearted* he says  
That is, those who are weak; Those who are down; Those who need it most

And Rom 15 speaks to it even more; And I want you to see it – Rom 15:1-2

*We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. [2] Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.*  
To encourage him; To cheer him; To inspire him; To hearten him; To raise his spirits  
Encouragement is one of the *reasons* for connecting with others, *and* one of the benefits

Which Becky and I were blessed to receive *last* weekend, as we gathered and connected with some of the other Senior Pastors and their wives in our Fellowship  
It was a sweet time of fellowship, and encouragement abounded

Second, connect with others . . .

- **For support (Gal 6:2)**

Fully engaged believers connect with one another in the body – for support  
Just like **Gal 6:2** says – *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*  
The *law of Christ* referring to his teaching that we should love one another; That we should love our neighbors as ourselves

Part of which we fulfill when we support our brother or sister in a time of need; Or struggle; Or burden; Or difficulty  
Coming alongside them and alleviating what you can, while expressing care and concern for what you can't  
Help the weak Paul said; And *be patient with them all* (1 Thess 5:14)\*\*\*\*\*

- And don't miss the *reciprocal* nature of this – *bear one another's burdens* it says  
Implying that there will be a day when *you're* on the other end  
Kind of like that song by Bill Withers (**Graphic**), first recorded some 40 years ago, and bouncing around in my head the last 4 days; Take a look (**Lean On Me – chorus**)

Fully engaged believers connect with others for support – mutual support

In fact, so reciprocal is it, that **1 Cor 12:24-26** says . . .  
*God has so composed the body . . . that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*  
That's support; And the 2<sup>nd</sup> benefit of connecting\*\*\*\*\*

3<sup>rd</sup>, is exhortation; Connect with others . . .

- **For exhortation (Heb 3:12-13)**

It's the mutual exchange of earnest advice or counsel; Sometimes to do something, sometimes to stop; Which you may not *think* of as a benefit . . .  
At least not in the moment; But in the long run, it's invaluable

**Eph 4:25** says – *let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another*

B/c we're in this together – the church, of *all* places, should be a place of truth  
Not to embarrass or make each other feel bad, but to urge one another toward righteousness and maturity

A place, where instead of *enabling* one another with *grace alone*, which we're prone to do – we should exhort one another with the *truth* as well; *Grace and truth*\*\*\*\*\*

Which is what Heb 3 gets at explicitly; And indicates that there's way too much at stake to mince words, or *withhold* the truth; Heb 3:12-13

*Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God [high stakes]. [13] But exhort one another [as in strongly urge one another, insist, push] *every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.**

With so much at stake, we *need* to speak the truth to one another

- But here's the deal – you can't exhort someone if you don't connect with them  
Whether it's face to face or via the phone or through an email – exhortation requires connection

And *effective* exhortation – i.e. sin-defeating exhortation, sin-diminishing exhortation, mind-changing exhortation – requires *frequent* connection

Every day it says – *as long as it's called today*; That is, as long as we're still *in* this age, this day

Effective exhortation requires frequent connection

Otherwise, we run the risk of allowing the deceitfulness of sin to harden our hearts  
And thereby not only continue in it, but *reject* the exhortation of others

- It's one of the reasons why church each weekend is a must; And why a small group during the week is too; With *informal* connections thrown in along the way  
So that *every day*, you're connecting with someone for the purpose of encouragement and exhortation  
It's not a *fail-safe* means of avoiding sin and its heart-hardening deceitfulness, but it goes a long way

4<sup>th</sup>, connect with others . . .

- **For accountability (Acts 19:18)**

And before I say any more, let's be clear about what accountability *is*, and what it isn't  
Accountability is not just *divulging* your sin; You know, walking into your Small Group or sitting down over coffee, and basically throwing up b/c you feel guilty  
Only to return to your vomit 3 days later, while ignoring the counsel you got  
Disclosure alone does not equal accountability

Accountability is submitting yourself to the scrutiny and wisdom of others, for the purpose of godliness and growth

Submitting to their scrutiny, by opening up your heart/life for them to plainly see . . .  
And submitting to their wisdom, by following their counsel and abiding by their consequences; That's accountability

➤ Which means, that though it doesn't *end* with divulging your sin and struggle, it definitely starts there; Just like it did for those in Ephesus in **Acts 19:18**  
It says that – *Many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices*  
Confessing, as in admitting their sin and expressing their remorse . . .  
And divulging, as in opening up their lives for all to see

*That's* submitting yourself to the scrutiny of others  
Not to shock them or draw attention to yourself, but to bear fruit in keeping with repentance, and grow in godliness\*\*\*\*\*  
That's the first part of accountability

➤ The second, is submitting yourself to their *wisdom*  
Like Paul says in **Eph 5:21** – *be filled with the Spirit . . . submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ*  
Submitting, as in yielding to the guidance and counsel of another

The very thing that happens in families, as children obey their parents; And in marriages, as wives respect their husbands . . .  
And in the church, as we voluntarily yield to the wise counsel of others\*\*\*\*\*

➤ For instance, if you're struggling with the sin of gluttony, biblical accountability not only says you should *divulge* that, and allow people close enough to see it in you . . .  
But that you should also submit to their *counsel* regarding how to change, and their *consequences* if you don't

So a typical conversation of accountability might go something like this – “Brother, you need to start counting your calories and lose some weight”  
“And if you don't, you're coming to the gym with me at 6am every morning”  
“B/c temple of the Holy Spirit that you are, you're not presenting yourself as holy and acceptable to him” (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Rom 12:1)

And your *response* should go something like this – “Ok; I'll get on it; And if I don't make progress, I'll go to the gym with you”  
That's submitting yourself not only to the scrutiny of others, but also to their wisdom  
All for the purpose of godliness and growth  
And it's one more benefit of connecting with them

And then last, fully engaged followers of Christ connect with others . . .

• **For perseverance (Heb 3:14)**

Look at **Heb 3:14**; After saying that we should exhort one another for the purpose of avoiding the *effects* of sin, it says this . . .

*[14] For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*

IOW we're saved now, and *have* been since we first believed and repented, if indeed we persevere to the end; If we don't persevere, we were never saved in the first place  
That's what it's saying

And if that were the only page of Scripture we had, you might think that your salvation is entirely up to you

But it's not; B/c we know from other Scriptures that those God saves, he keeps – never to leave them or forsake them

IOW if you're truly saved, you *will* persevere; God will give you the strength and impulse; But it's incumbent on us to show it; To live it out to the very end

And in the context of the previous verses, it's yet one more reason why fully engaged believers connect with others – namely, to persevere in their faith  
To endure and persist in their belief  
To sustain their *original confidence* in the promises and work of Jesus on their behalf  
And thereby show that they're really saved, to the glory of God and the joy of their soul

Talk about high stakes; We *need* each other (**Summary**)

We need each other to go the distance – with plenty of encouragement, support, exhortation, and accountability along the way

➤ All of which you'll find in our various ministries (**Graphic**)  
Especially Small Groups, Men's Ministry, Women's Ministry, and Student Ministries  
Each and every one of these ministries is designed for discipleship – to help you learn the Word, grow in maturity, and *connect* with others  
Just like the early church, just like the apostles, just like Jesus, and just like God designed

So let me encourage you, in fact, let me exhort you – to consider all this, and take a few minutes before you leave . . .

To stop by one of the tables or kiosks in the lobby, and get plugged in; Or at least get more information

B/c with the start of the ministry year right around the corner, this is a perfect time to connect others; A perfect time to fully engage

Pray – Lord, thank you for the blessing of church; And the blessing of other believers with whom we can connect; Find us faithful to do so – to be fully engaged  
And receive our tithes and offerings now as an expression of that – an expression of our love for you, and for your church