

Cultivating Connection

A biblical approach to relationship challenges

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Introduction

These are the topics we've covered in our four sessions on this topic.

Session 1: Our need for good connections with God and with others.

Session 2: The Seat of the Offended and the Seat of the Offender

Session 3: The 5 Apology Languages

Session 4: Restoring Broken and Wounded Relationships

1. What do you remember from these sessions that have been helpful for you?
2. What would you tell your younger self about relationships? What advice would you give her so she avoids any mistakes you've made and she improves her relationships?

Community—and Why We Need It

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

It is truly important that we have and maintain close community with other believers. We are to *spur one another on* to love and good deeds. That happens in community, when you're with others.

1 Corinthians 12:12 – 18

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

You are an important, essential, and needed part of the body of Christ, and the body will not thrive or be fully healthy without you.

If you never commit yourself to a particular body of believers, despite whatever obstacles you may face, and go through the sometimes-painful act of loving, you will never have in-depth relationships in a community. Real community requires that we continue to love despite the difficulty of particular people that are unlovely.

You need to find a church that upholds the gospel and preaches the Word of God! All of us need a structure that will regularly stimulate us to love and good deeds. So don't forsake the "assembling of yourselves together."

Beginning your New Year Focusing on One Word

Choosing a word—the right word—to focus on for an entire year can bring personal change and spiritual formation in your life. After you choose your one word, find a Scripture verse or passage that relates to your word, and perhaps begin a journal of how God is going to use that one word in your life in 2025. I encourage you to let others know what your one word is.

I hope you'll take this challenge because I believe you'll see how profitable it is in your life and you'll want to do it every year. It's much better than a New Year's resolution!

Five Spiritual Goals

1. Live like you're loved (and liked) by God.

Romans 8:35, 38-39: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. Act like you're truly free.

Galatians 5:1: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

3. Walk like you're righteous.

2 Corinthians 5:21: God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

4. Thrive like you're chosen.

John 15:16: You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

5. Endure like you're brave and strong.

Joshua 1:9: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

"The road to holiness is a journey of long obedience."