

You Need To Get Connected

Proverbs 18:24

There are somewhere between four and five hundred million people connected to the Internet. Companies are spending hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars – not millions, billions – to run cable and to put satellites in space in order to connect everybody in the world.

As we continue in our series on “Living the Christian Life Today and Tomorrow,” I want to talk to you about another kind of connection. A relational connection. For the past thirty years there has been a strong emphasis in our society on *personal individuality, self-expression, self-esteem, and self-fulfillment.* **The idea is simply to focus on the individual.** The attitude is, “Regardless of what everybody else thinks I have got to do what is best for me.” As a result of that we have produced a very *disconnected society.* People don't really know each other any more. **We don't know our neighbors, the people we work with, or the people in this church.** We have become a *disconnected society.*

Now we can blame it on our busy schedules, or we can blame it on society itself, or we can blame it on the size of our church. But the truth of the matter is that *most people simply do not put forth an effort to get to know people.* And my challenge to our regular attenders is to be on the lookout for *visitors and new people* and get to know them.

God made this revealing statement in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good for man to be alone.” **You were made for relationships.** You were created for *connections.* Psychologists tell us there a universal need to belong. **Even Jesus needed friends.** The Bible has a very important word about connecting with people at the deepest level. **That spiritual connection is called “fellowship.”**

We use the word "fellowship" to refer to just hanging out with people (which it is not), having a party (which it is not), being with friends (which it is not). Fellowship is more than socializing. Fellowship is more than networking. Fellowship is more than making contacts with contacts. It is even more than just spending fun time with people you love. Fellowship in its truest sense is soul-to-soul connection, as seen in Romans 8:16, "For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children." As Christians we have a Common Denominator and His name is Christ. Sadly most people on this earth have never enjoyed the true meaning of genuine fellowship. They have never had a spiritual connection with anybody. You may have had an emotional connection, a sexual connection, or an intellectual connection. But nobody has ever had a heart-to-heart, soul-to-soul, fellowship connection unless you know the Lord and have learned to fellowship with other believers.

Why is it so essential to connect with others? There are emotional and physical, as well as spiritual reasons. Studies have shown that relationships will cause you to live longer. In addition, Dr. Edward Hallowell has written a book simply called "Connect." He says, "We are a nation of doers. We hurry from place to place, filling our lives with all kinds of activities, sometimes over scheduling our kids and ourselves. But what really sustains us emotionally, psychologically and physically is connectedness, the feeling that we are part of something that matters, something larger than ourselves that gives life meaning. Just as there is a vitamin deficiency, there is a human contact deficiency and it weakens the body, the mind and the spirit. Its ravages can be severe – depression, physical illness, early death. Or they can be mild – under achievement, fatigue, and loneliness. Just as we need Vitamin C each day, we also need a dose of human contact everyday with other people." There are many scientific studies that have proven that you have to have this in your life in order to really live and not just exist.

What does it mean to be *spiritually connected*? What is it like? The Bible gives us four *word pictures* or *metaphors* that says, "Being spiritually connected is like this..." **We are going to look at these this morning because a lot of you have a *misunderstanding of what church is all about*.** Church is not a place to *attend*. Church is a *group* to be *connected to*. **This weekend about 600 to 800 people will be at Mountain Grove in our services, but only about half of those 600 to 800 are really *connected spiritually to this church*.** So I want to explain to you the benefits of why you need to get connected. It is one of the essentials for "Living the Christian Life Today and Tomorrow." You need people to live with.

What does the Bible say is it like to be spiritually connected?

First, it is like being a brick in a building. The Bible compares the church to a *spiritual building*. Ephesians 2:20 & 22 reads like this, "New believers are like a building that God owns. Jesus is the most important stone in the building and the whole building is joined together in Christ. You are being built into a place where God lives through the Spirit."

When we were building this building I was like a kid in a candy store as I watched in amazement. Because of its size it is a very complicated building and there are lots of details to it. To make it complete it takes tens of thousands of different parts. **The key to making a building is all of the parts have to fit together.** If they don't fit together, you don't have a building. As long as the pieces are disconnected they are just stuff – just a pile of building materials. **They may be in the building, but they are not a part of the building.** In other words, that brick, or that switch box, or whatever, only becomes a part of the building when it is placed in its proper place. If it is not connected, it is not a part of the building.

That is a parable of some of you today. You come to Mountain Grove, you attend here, you are in the Mountain Grove family. **But**

you are not really *a part* of the Mountain Grove family. **Why?** Because you are *not connected*. You come and you sit and you hear God's word and you sing the songs, you go out and talk to people in the Lobby and you go home. **But you are a spectator, you are not actually a participator.** You need to get connected.

Ephesians 2:21 reads like this, "We who believe are carefully joined together becoming a holy temple for the Lord." **God is building a spiritual temple, a living one.** And it is going to last forever. To be a part of it, you have got to get connected to it.

Second, it's like being a part of a body. The Bible calls the church the body of Christ over and over again. It compares the church to a physical body.

Romans 12:4-5 says this, "Just as there are many parts to our bodies, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of it and it takes every one of us to make it complete for we all have a different work to do. So we belong to each other (notice "we belong to each other") and each needs all the others."

This verse is literally packed with spiritual truths. I want to point out four things just from this one verse.

First, notice that in a church we are all different. We are all *unique*. God does not want you to be just like anybody else. **He made you uniquely you.** He wants you to be you. He does not want you copying anybody else. **You do not have to be like them.** You are unique.

Second, we all have different roles to play, different work to do, different niches to fill. In a body not everything does the same thing. Can you imagine if all the parts of your body did the same thing? **We have different roles to play in the body of Christ.** In other words, we all have different ministries to perform.

Three, we are all needed to make the body complete. The hand can't say to the foot, "I don't need you," and the ear can't say to the nose, "I don't need you." **We are all needed in the body of Christ.** Some parts of your body are very small but they are still needed. You may think, "In this big body of Christ called Mountain Grove Church, I'm just a big toe on the body." **Have you ever stubbed your big toe? Did that experience get your attention?**

If you are at Mountain Grove Church, you are needed here in the body of Christ. You are not here by accident. God brought you here because you have a role to play in this body of the body of Christ called Mountain Grove.

Four, we all belong to each other. The Christian life is not just a matter of *believing* – it is a matter of *belonging*. You say, "I believe in Jesus." **That is great!** But you need to have a sense of *belonging*. The fact is; God has given us at least thirty instructions in the New Testament that you cannot fulfill unless you chose to be a part of the local church.

Now lets get back to what it's like being connected.

Three, it's like being a sheep in a flock. This is Jesus' favorite term. In Luke 12:32 He says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Psalm 100:3 says, "God made us and we are His. We are His people, the sheep of His pasture." Psalm 23 says, "Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to life down in green pastures..." When you get in God's flock, the great shepherd, Jesus Christ, takes care of the needs in your life.

Jesus said this in John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." **That is how much you matter to God.** Jesus Christ laid down His life for you. He continues

in verse 12, "A hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep, so when the wolf comes he abandons the sheep and runs away and then the wolves attack the flock and scatter it. A hired hand runs away because he cares nothing for the sheep." He continues in verses 27-29, "But I am the good shepherd. I know My sheep and My sheep know Me and I lay down My life for My sheep. My sheep listen to My voice and I know them and they follow Me and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish and no one can ever snatch them out of My hand."

Why did God choose the flock as an image of what it means to be spiritually connected? Because in a flock the sheep are *protected* and *cared* for. That is one of the functions of a church. **You need that in your life.** When you are getting beat up in the business world, when your marriage and family are being strained to the limit, when you are facing a personal crisis, you need people who will step up to bat for you. You need people that when everybody else walks out of your life, they walk into it.

And you need to find a ministry that you can get involved with. A ministry that would allow you to *make a contribution*. Find a ministry that you are *gifted* for. **Find a ministry that you have a heart for.** And I promise you that your life will be blessed by helping other people grow spiritually, by encouraging others, and by being a minister in God's kingdom. You actually get blessed more yourself than you give out.

Let me be real personal for just a moment. If you are a *perfect person*, if you *have it all together*, if there is *no sin in your life*, go find another church. We don't need you here. **On the other hand, if you have some hang-ups, if you have a few screws loose, if you are a few eggs short of a full omelet, if your elevator doesn't go all the way to the top, maybe you have some bad habits, a few hang-ups from your past, if you have some areas in your life that just aren't all together, then, this is the place for you.** This is the place for people who have blown it and want to change, who want to grow, who want to make a

difference, who admit that they don't have it all together. If you are that way, then come on down, because you are welcome here.

One of the reasons why God has His hand of blessing on this church is because the members here really do love each other. It makes all the difference in the world. That is why sometimes you walk into a service it feels like electricity, because the people who are here are here because they want to be here.

If you are not saved, why not today?

Everyone please stand for prayer.

Father,

Your Word is true. Thank You that we don't have to go through life disconnected and isolated. May we never take it for granted. In Jesus' name. Amen.