



Working it out

1. What are some ways that we can be intentional about helping people to move toward greater and deeper levels of relationship both inside the church gathering and outside of it?
2. How can we intentionally foster an atmosphere of joy and trust where people are grace-givers rather than joy-killers?
3. What are some of the things that allow a critical spirit to overtake our hearts?

What steps can we take to guard against this?

What steps can we take to rid our hearts of a critical spirit?

4. What barriers do you face in building relationships with others? How can you overcome those barriers?
5. Which of the characteristics of a church with loving relationships do you need to personally work on right now? What are the first steps you can take to do this?



Praying Through

1. Pray for the specific ways that you need to grow as the result of this study.
2. As we continue the IPM's process, ask the Lord to give our church family insight into His will and direction for our church.
3. Ask the Lord to help us as a church to discover His will and to grow through the journey and not just focus on the destination of finding our long-term pastor.



Building Bridges to Others: Loving Relationships

Part 2

A healthy church with loving relationships is marked by believers who love and serve one another in an atmosphere of joy and trust.

Churches strong in loving relationships are characterized by ...

1. Believers actively serving one another, meeting needs with compassionate deeds.
2. Believers practicing the "one another commands" in Scripture.
3. Believers demonstrating God's love to the world by loving each other and their community.

4. Believers ENGAGING in opportunities to move into deeper levels of relationships. Acts 2:42-46; Heb. 10:24-25

John Ortberg suggests 3 levels of relationships:

- 1st discuss ORDINARY events – safe things we agree on
- 2nd express strong OPINIONS and significant feelings – risk disagreement and rejection
- 3rd reveal deeper secrets, STRUGGLES, and temptations, able to share dreams and failures – done only with wise discernment and trust (*Groups*, 52).

As a church we need to be INTENTIONAL in moving people from level 1 to level 3, in order to help them mature and grow as a disciple of Christ.

5. Believers fostering an atmosphere of joy and trust, being GRACE - GIVERS rather than joy-killers. Acts 11:23; 1 Pet. 1:8; Heb. 13:17; Ps. 100:1-2; Titus 3:10-11; 1 Peter 5:8

A critical spirit is deadly because it...

- Creates a SELF-FULFILLING prophecy
- Destroys TRUST
- UNDERMINES leadership
- Spreads quickly multiplying BAD attitudes
- Does the work of the EVIL ONE

6. Believers committing to RESOLVE conflict with intentional, biblical steps for peacemaking and reconciliation. Mt. 5:23-24; 18:15-17; Rom. 12:18; 14:19; Eph. 4:3; Heb. 12:14

Love is...

- LISTENING when another is speaking – it's that simple.
- OVERLOOKING petty faults and forgiving all failures.
- VALUING other people for who they are.
- EXPRESSING it in practical, tangible ways.

– Dennis Waitley

PRIORITY: Build *healthy relationships* where biblical one another commands are practiced, grace is freely extended, forgiveness and reconciliation are championed, and the unity of the Spirit is guarded in the bond of peace!

Reflection – Discussion – Application



Warming up

- Who is one of the best neighbors where you live now or in the past? What made him or her the best neighbor?
- Describe what you consider to be the ideal friendship.



Digging In

- Read Acts 2:42-46; Heb. 10:24-25. What are some of the characteristics you see in the early church that seem to be missing in churches today?
- Joseph was nicknamed Barnabas, meaning son of encouragement. How did Barnabas encourage others according to these Scriptures?
Acts 4:36-37
Acts 9:23-27
Acts 11: 20-24
Acts 11:25-26
Acts 15: 36-39
- What are some of the Biblical steps to peacemaking according to these scriptures?
Mt. 5:23-24
Mt. 18:15-17
Gal. 6:1
Romans 12:18; 14:19