

Relationships

Series Video

Series Intro: Did you know, over the last 25 years, 40 million American adults have walked away from the church? Often, if they were honest, they would say, “I tried, but it did not work for me.” Have you ever felt that way? That is what this series is all about. God wants to help:

- Why are relationships so hard?
- Does my life matter?
- Why am I so tired?
- Why is change so difficult?
- What do I do when life does not go the way I planned?
- Will I ever have enough?

If you will show up for the next few weeks, we are going to see how Jesus and the Bible answers these questions. We are going to see how God wants to bring order to our disordered lives.

Welcome

Intro: Honeymoon- Wedding, next day in Cancun. Tina is crying and I am wondering, should I jump? I am one day into marriage, I am in paradise, an all-inclusive resort with my bride, and yet she is on the bed, cry, talking to her mother. How could I possibly be that bad at marriage.

Life is full of paradoxes. Often the people we love the most, who bring you the most joy, the best memories are also the people who have caused you the most pain. **Why is this?** Because we give them our hearts. A stranger cannot break your heart, destroy your trust, or disappoint you. You do not put those expectations on strangers. But family can, friends can, neighbors can, and church members can.

Illustrate: Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss.

IF we are honest: We have hurt people we love, who were counting on us, and who trusted us. In these moments we are tempted to believe, I am better off alone.

“It is not good for the man to be alone.” — Genesis 2:18

- **Why are relationships so important?**

KEY IDEA: God uses healthy relationships to connect us, protect us, grow us, and stretch us.

I cannot become the best version of myself alone.

1. Relationships Connect Us. Genesis 2:18

Explain: We were made for relationship. “It is not good for the man to be alone.” You were made for connection. The Bible teaches that we are created in God’s image. God has always existed in relationship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Bible speaks of God building a body, a family, a household; people who belong together.

- **Attachment theory** says we can only flourish when we have secure connections.
- **The Harvard Study of Adult Development** teaches us that good relationships are associated with both greater happiness and better health.

Monthly Practice: Prayer

- **We spend our lives chasing;** money, career, house, success, experiences, and recognition often to the neglect of our relationships. These pursuits are not bad but what we are really chasing is happiness and next to Jesus, the greatest source of happiness is healthy relationships. If we are not careful, we get, we will achieve all the other stuff and miss out on happiness and discover, if we are alone, that other stuff is not important. If you make a billion dollars but do not have people who love you and relate to like a normal person, then what's the point.

Illustrate: I have literally felt this, this month. One of my best friends moved away, my daughter, who I played golf with several days a week moved to college, which for them was good, but I've been telling Tina, I'm lonely. I have to be more intentional in some of my other friendships.

Do you have friends? 5 Characteristics:

- **Mutual effort.** They pursue you just like you pursue them.
- **Celebrate your wins.** They are not jealous.
- **Reliable.** They show up when you need support or help.
- **Safe.** You can be yourself without fearing judgment.
- **Respect your boundaries.** They care about your values and want to love you well.

Apply: Groups- let's work at actually becoming friends. Attending group is not the same as being connected.

2. Relationships Protect Us.

Explain: When your relationships are strong and healthy you are less likely to do dumb stuff. Many of the dumb things people do is because they feel alone. Sometimes we are doing something dumb to be **accepted** or to just **be seen**. Sometimes we do dumb stuff to **numb the pain of loneliness**.

Moment of reflection- when was the last time you did something you regret, something foolish, something you wish you could take back? Were you trying to be accepted or numbing the pain of being alone?

Illustrate: My addiction was driven by loneliness.

- AA and other recovery programs. You cannot do it alone.
- Rat Park, 1970s, Bruce Alexander

- **Isolation doesn't just make us lonely, it makes us vulnerable.**

- I am talking to Tina, I went to two of my friends and just said, I have more time and need more time with you. I would like to invest more in our relationship. I do not want to be vulnerable.

Argue: **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10**, "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble."

Matthew 9- Matthew, "Follow me"

Apply: Over the course of your life, if you will build strong relationships, those relationships will protect you from bad decisions and empower you to make wise decisions. In groups- this means we have to be willing to talk about our decisions and listen to the counsel of people who know and care about us.

3. Relationships Grow Us.

Explain: Relationships do not just make us happy. God uses them to make us holy.

Relationships bring to the surface the wounded or unfinished places in my character. At first that may sound bad but this is an opportunity to learn and grow. Exposure creates an opportunity for transformation.

Illustrate: Tina and me, we were so immature...Marriage helped us, forced us to grow up.

Video

Argue: John 8:32,36, Galatians 5:22, Love. Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. Goodness. Faithfulness. Gentleness. Self-control. Most of the fruit of the Spirit becomes visible in relationship. Relationships reveal what has actually been formed in me.

Apply: Can we love people who are imperfect? Remember, the greatest experience in the world is to be known and loved. Love is the greatest change agent there is.

4. Relationships Stretch Us.

Explain: Relationships are the lab where we learn to practice, exercise our faith so it can grow.

Illustrate: Let's pretend I wanted to run a Marathon. I don't, we are pretending. What do you think I should do first? My first step would be to find a more experienced runner and ask if I could run with him. That would accomplish two things. **First**, it would cause me to run when I do not feel like running. **Second**, I would learn things about how to train, how to eat, how to rest, and how to prepare for a race that would accelerate my growth and performance. This is true in every area of your life.

Explain: Relationships show me a better way and challenge me to do what I would not otherwise do.

Illustrate: Marriage crisis- we joined a small group for young married couples. We are not the only ones. We can figure this out. We were learning from each other.

Argue: Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

1 Corinthians 11:1, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

Apply: Formation is not primarily taught but caught. Relationships are the soil where our lives grow. If your life is Out of Order, get connected.

- **Core Value: People are our Priority**
- We all have to work for it. Our culture makes deep meaningful relationships hard but it is a fight worth winning.

Next Week: Purpose, why am I here?

Invitation