

Gospel Ministry Invests in Meaningful Relationships

- We are in an age now where you can connect with thousands of people all over the world and be friends/followers, without a deep relationship.
 - We have 600 friends on Facebook but how many know our struggles, triumphs and heart
 - We text a dozens of people each week, but how many meaningful in person conversations...
 - Plus we can use technology to hide emotion, body language or frustrations. Easier just to send text messages then have real conversation about something bothering us. Or delicate question.
 - We can use technology to keep people at arm's length. To be connected, but apart from others. To know what is going on in their life, without having to be involved in their life.
- As adults we can do the same thing: how often do we conversations that go past sports, weather, or basic information
- Marriage—Parenting—Ministry!
- How often do we want to come to church, but not be involved in people's life
- Do we avoid Sunday School or other small groups because we are uncomfortable sharing from our life or heart?
- Maybe we hesitant to serve in a new role because it will mean making new friends or ministering in a way that will mean investing our life/emotions in someone?
- How are we to understand relationships in ministry, in the life of the church?
- Let's look at someone who knew the depth of joy and disappointment from people. Paul—John Mark abandons him and Barnabas on first missionary journey. Many people receive Christ, but many oppose him. Kicked out of towns, plotted against and even stoned. Then after establishing churches look at what he deals with in churches—gross sexual immorality, lawsuits amongst believers, division over Lord's Supper, people getting drunk at Lord's Supper, confusion in worship services, church members fighting...Let's look at how Paul describes his ministry.
- **1 Thessalonians 2:7-12**
- **Gospel Ministry invests in meaningful relationships.**
 - Like a nursing mother with her own children
 - Like a father with his child
 - You can't use language like this apart from deep, loving relationship
 - Paul couldn't use this language if he just stood up, gathered crowd, proclaimed Gospel and left.
 - Paul couldn't use this language if he just set up the structure of a church and left
 - Paul could use this type of language because he had a deep, loving, meaningful relationships with the people in the church. Look at how Paul describes his ministry in Corinthians.
 - **2 Corinthians 3:1-3**
 - **Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.**

- Are we seeking to invest in relationships, in people or are we investing in something else
- **Quote from Radical Idea**
 - I pray we are striving to minister as the people of God in the midst of relationships. Not depending on programs, performances or professionals to do the work for us.
- **In fact, investing in people is so valuable it is worth inconveniences**
 - Paul was willing to work for a living, while ministering to the people so to avoid laying any extra burden on the people
 - But at this time, Paul was willing to be inconvenienced for the sake of gospel-ministry
 - **Paul was focused on growing people in Christ, not growing a comfortable lifestyle**
 - How many of us shy away from relationships because it inconveniences us.
 - We don't want to invest the time, energy and emotion it takes to minister to children and youth.
 - We are tired of frustration, disappointment and lack of investment from the other person.
 - Maybe we don't have time to invest in meaningful church relationships because we are investing in our homes, 401k/403b, cars, TVs, phones and cloths.
 - Maybe some of us just don't think the investment is worth the outcome. Maybe we view relationships a little like the man in this video...
 - **Video: Up in the Air**
 - Should we lay the burden of relationships aside, move swiftly in life by not be tied down
 - Or we can understand that in God's Kingdom..
- **Investing in people is worth the inconvenience because our goal is transformation**
 - Verse 11-12
 - Paul's goal was not just information
 - Paul's goal was not just right behavior
 - **Paul's goal was that the gospel of God would transform people**
 - Transformation happens through a relationship with God and relationships with others.
 - **God has chosen to use people to proclaim the Gospel and to help each other grow in Christ**
 - Paul was exhorting, encouraging and charging people because he wanted to see them mature in Christ, to be transformed by the power of the Gospel.
 - **Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.**
 - **Colossians 1:28-29 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.**
 - Most of the students thanked a teacher or mentor who helped them as young believers.
 - These graduates don't need your presents...they need your presence. They need you to invest in them, more than their bank account.
 - Your children, spouse and the people around you.
 - The greatest gift I will leave Anna Kate is not an inheritance on this earth, but an inheritance in heaven.
- If Gospel ministry invests in relationships, in the people of God.
- Who are you investing in?
- Who are you helping to see the forgiveness of God in Christ? Who are you helping to understand the freedom and joy of living in relationship with God instead of enslaved to sinful desires?

- I want you to consider investing in two types of relationships. One with other believers. Are you investing in other believers—are you a part of a small group? Is your sleep more important than your sanctification?
 - Are you investing in the younger generation? Consider Safe Families, children’s ministry, youth ministry, life groups, etc.
 - Two: are you investing in unbelievers? If we wonder why there are not more people submitting their life to God through Christ and few baptisms? Perhaps it’s because we are not investing in unbelievers. Loving them with God’s love, grace and truth. Presenting God’s message of reconciliation in Christ to them and calling them to repentance. Think about a neighbor, co-worker, family member or friend who does not know Christ. Will you invest in them?
 - Choose a person in each category and start investing. Make a phone call. Meet over lunch or on a shopping trip. Find a way to be their life and to open your life to them.
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- And as you begin to invest in them, image how God can use you and our congregation to transform lives.
 - Begin to image your students leaving for college or the military prepared to navigate the complexities and temptations with godly wisdom.
 - Image how God can use you to help transform someone’s life from addiction to liberation.
 - Think about the joy of rejoicing as God rescues marriages, comforts the hurt and boldly proclaims the gospel as we invest in each other.
 - How could God use our church if every member was committed to investing in relationships?
 - We have already seen the fruit of God’s people investing in lives. I can’t wait to see how God will continue to us his people for his glory in transforming lives.