



REDEEMING HOPE

Connected
Vision 2022

[January, 2022]

Series Overview

Human beings are innately drawn towards connection with one another. We gather together in groups by affinity, religion, culture, or profession and this pull towards relationship is essential to what it means to be a healthy human. Those who live in healthy relationships with others statistically have greater health benefits like lower inflammation, decreased effects of aging, lower rates of heart disease, and overwhelmingly longer lives.^{1 2}

But, the unfortunate fact about humanity is that we struggle to connect. We often miscommunicate, causing the breaking of social bonds. We can act selfishly, even when we know this is to our detriment and to the detriment of others. Sometimes, we withdraw from friendships when we are in pain even if we know that those connections will bring healing. We even use the language of physical pain to describe our social and emotional disconnect: "She *broke* my heart" or "He *hurt* my feelings".³

It is a strange paradox of human existence to long for connection and yet be so challenged by it. And nowhere do we see this more starkly in contrast than in the Christian faith. There are many varied and complex reasons for our aversion to real connection, especially within a spiritual context, but two reasons are (1) to avoid accountability or (2) to avoid intimacy. Both of these are required for true, authentic, spiritual connections that help a collective local church follow Jesus together. We attempt to solve this problem through connection without accountability or connection without intimacy.

Some within the church attempt to have connections without accountability. This can look like frequently jumping in and out of friendships or groups, a lack of honesty about life's challenges, and quickly withdrawing from relationships when challenged or held accountable to biblical standards. These are all symptoms of the deeper problem: not wanting the difficult accountability of authentic community. Meaningful connection with others who follow Jesus means they have permission to speak into and influence our lives, and can hold us accountable to the Scripture's goals and standards.

Some within the church attempt to have connections without intimacy. This can look like casual relationships and conversations which require no emotional exposure, over-intellectualization and academic-esque Bible studies that insulate from sharing the pain of everyday life, or simply withdrawing into isolation when presented with opportunities to grow in relational depth. These are symptoms of the deeper problem: not wanting the potential for being hurt that comes with authentic community. Meaningful connection with others who follow Jesus involves giving of ourselves to one another and includes the risk of being rejected or hurt.

However, there is a better way. We can have healthy accountability *and* brave intimacy that can be life-transforming through the Gospel. HOW?

- Because we are incapable of perfection yet Jesus becomes our perfection, we can be challenged by others towards holiness without our identity being crushed when we fail.
- Because Christ is ultimately who we need for relational stability, we can be exposed to intimacy and risk being hurt without being crushed if it happens.

If connecting is what it means to be human, and accountability and intimacy are key elements of that, then Jesus' work on the cross not only gives us the freedom to be in healthy relationships, He gives us the freedom to be human again.

¹ Cook, Gareth. "Why We Are Wired to Connect" (Scientific American, Oct 22, 2013).
<<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-we-are-wired-to-connect>>

² Grossman, Ron; Leroux, Charles. "A New Roseto Effect" (Chicago Tribune, Oct 11, 1996).
<<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1996-10-11-9610110254-story.html>>

³ Lieberman, Matthew Dylan. *Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect*. (Crown Publishing, 2013)

Specific Background for Series

At the beginning of every year we have a series that allows us the time to explore our vision as a church and explain our goals for the upcoming year. We restate three key elements of our vision (family, following Jesus, helping others find Jesus) in new and creative ways that allow us the time to remind ourselves of why we are planting this church and what makes Redeeming Hope unique and special for Clarksville and beyond.

During this time, we try to emphasize key elements of the upcoming year. For this year, we are celebrating the collaboration of Co-Lead pastors, gathering together in person weekly and elevating the importance of the gathering,

We also focus on our three key elements of mission: exploring faith, cultivating disciples, and equipping missionaries.

Occasion, Purpose, and Message

OCCASION

What prompted the writing of this series?

- The new calendar year of 2022

PURPOSE

What does the series hope to accomplish? What is the expected outcome?

- Reminding people of our vision
- Celebrating the collaboration of Co-Lead pastors
- Emphasizing the importance of gathering weekly together

Message

What is the series actually saying?

- We are a family that follows Jesus and helps others find Him that values gathering weekly together. We want you to join us and commit to this family!

Themes and Unique Elements

Key Words: Family, following Jesus, mission, helping others find Jesus, collaboration, gathering weekly, regathering weekly

Unique elements: none

Major Theological Concepts

Ecclesiology: How and why the church should gather

Missiology: How and why we need to be on mission

Thematic/Timeline Outline

- 1/9/2022 Connected with One Another
- 1/16/2022 Connected with God
- 1/23/2022 Connected with the World

Artistic Elements

