



GOD'S DESIGN

A Corporate and Relational Community

A COMMUNITY THAT IMAGES GOD

Humanity is made in the Image of the Triune God

“God lives in community with himself! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in perfect harmony, love, and unity...Everything each person of the Trinity is and does is always in union with the others. We were made in the image of this glorious God. Is it any wonder, then, that this deep longing for intimacy and relationship is woven into the fabric of our nature? Human beings long to connect because that is what they were made for.” - **Timothy S. Lane and Paul Tripp, *How People Change*, page 67**

A corporate story not an individual one

Titus 2:11-14

Q: If we understand Christianity to be a corporate rather than individual story then what are some of the implications for us?

Q: In what ways has the pandemic, cultural, and personal challenges shown the importance of this aspect of God’s design?

A relational community not an isolated one

Ephesians 2:18-20

Q: In what ways has the pandemic, cultural, and personal challenges shown how critical relationships are in life?

Humanity desires to belong to a community where they experience mutual acceptance and concern, a mutual goal or mission. This is a God given desire because we were made in His image. He intends to fulfill it, not just with Himself, but by gathering a people and bonding them together by the Gospel.

REFRAMING OUR EXPECTATIONS

We must reframe our expectations to match what God expects of us

→ We are to be _____ - 1 Corinthians 12:12-21

→ We are to be _____ - Ephesians 4:25

Q: What are our fears around being vulnerable? How does the Gospel speak to these fears?

→ We are to _____ - Ephesians 4:25; Hebrews 10:24-25



WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

People have a relational capacity. We are not able to have the same deep level of connection and vulnerability with a maximum number of people. However, it is wise and beneficial to have varying levels of connection with groups of people. Josh Meyers, in his book *The Search to Belong*, describes several spheres, or spaces, of relationship that are beneficial for people to have based on research in proxemics. (Daniel Im, *No Silver Bullets*, pages 115-117)

- **Public space** - A space with 75+ people where you belong, a part of a community, and you somewhat get to know those around you, but there is not much of an opportunity to really get to know others because it is so large. (Example in a church context: a whole congregation)
- **Social space** - A space with 20-50 people. This is a large group where you are safe to decide whom you would like to grow a deeper relationship with. It is big enough that newcomers won't feel like they're the center of attention, yet it's small enough that no one will fall through the cracks. It's big enough that everyone will find someone to connect with, but it's small enough that meaningful conversations can take place without people being uncomfortable. (Example in a church context: a whole small congregation)
- **Personal space** - A space with 8-12 people. This is the typical small group environment where you are intentionally connecting with others to go deeper, sharing life together, praying with one another, and allowing yourself to be known. Private information is shared, but this isn't the place where you are completely vulnerable and baring your whole soul. (Example in a church context: a Bible study or Life Group)
- **Intimate space** - A space with 2-3 people. This is an environment that you only let a few people into. It could be a spouse, a best friend, or an accountability group. This is an environment where nothing is held back, and there is a lot of intentionality in sharpening one another, being accountable to one another, and being intentional in community. (Example in a church context: a few relationships within a group)



We have to learn to think about what these expectations look like with different spaces. We will have varying degrees of relationships and that is ok. We can observe in Jesus' ministry that He had a relational capacity in a sense. There were some who were closer to Him than others. Only a few saw Him in His most vulnerable time in the Garden of Gethsemane. To expect the vulnerability of an *Intimate* space with a broad range of people would be difficult. Also, to expect the type of relationship that *Personal* space describes with the whole church would be unhealthy. The good news is that the local church provides an environment where all spaces can thrive.

LOOK INWARD - Think about your own heart...

Q: Do you function independently, dependently, or interdependently with other followers of Jesus in the local church?

Q: Which of the relational spaces do you currently engage in? Which relational space is lacking? Is there anything holding you back from engaging in that particular relational space?

EMBRACE EFFORT // AWKWARDNESS // PROCESS - Take a baby step...

Q: What step towards relationship and vulnerability do you need to take?

