



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC Authentic Relationships

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THEME Authentic Relationships

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MESSAGE SUMMARY

The state of society

People need relationships – connections that bind us to other people. Many suggest that loneliness is the next Public-Health issue; society is more interconnected than ever before, but ironically, loneliness is on the rise. With this in mind, we explore apostle Paul's heart in establishing relationships. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, we notice Paul's affection for the letter's recipients, likening himself to a nursing mother. The average mother spends about 3 months of time per year taking care of her children, and this is the exceptional dedication of mothers which we should all strive to emulate.

Recognising the need for others

Paul's extraordinary, sacrificial dedication to the people he served was a wholehearted response to the same command we have all been given: The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). He painted the picture of the church as the Body of Christ, interconnected at the highest level. Mankind was not made to be alone. As Christians, we belong to the body of church of which Christ is the Head (1 Corinthians 12).

The cure to loneliness is relationships. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 we notice Paul uses 3 words in particular: *Care, share* and *dear*. All three are important; as the saying goes, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Christianity is not merely an intellectual exercise but that of growth and communion with each other and our Lord Jesus Himself.

Seek authentic relationships

Authenticity can only occur when we bear our lives with those who journey with us in the faith. This will leave us vulnerable. Churches should be like the waiting room to see the doctor, not the waiting room before you attend a job interview. In the former, we recognise that we are all sick and in need of help. In the latter, we put on masks to hide our deficiencies in a bid to impress. We must make time and room in our lives for others. We cannot remain indifferent and aloof.

Conclusion

Authentic relationships are necessary. While some have been blessed with many such relationships, there are many among us who have few or none. We cannot sit passively by, waiting for relationships to be formed as if they would happen automatically. We need to be proactive, emulating Paul, who spared no hesitation in caring for fellow believers and sharing the Word with them, demonstrating no less effort than a dedicated nursing mother.

QUESTIONS

What is an authentic relationship? Why is it important?

Think of a close friend. What makes the relationship between you and this person valuable? What else can you do to move the relationship toward greater authenticity?

Are there people around you who are in need of help and care? What concrete steps can you take to extend that hand today?