



Creating a Culture of Connection

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends – John 15:12-13

All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another – John 13:35

There is no better way to dismantle a personality than to isolate it
The Princess of Wales, BBC TV's Panorama

Loving relationships will be the mark of the Church which tells the world of a loving God.

"I'm convinced that to be effective, the emerging church must create a culture of connection for a generation alone." John Burke

"It doesn't matter how hip the music, how funny the pastor, how postmodern the vibe, if a person comes and sits alone, feeling unconnected as an 'outsider' week after week, she won't come back." John Burke

A culture of connection requires a lot of effort to maintain. Creating a culture of connection requires ongoing leadership energy. Entropy sets into the culture very easily and must be intercepted.

Our generation longs for deep connection yet often settles for shallow ways of relating. In the wake of such high rates of divorce, neglect and abuse emerging generations long for connection, yet have been programmed for aloneness.

a/Pray For Community

b/Be a Loving Person – Live it

Become a healthy individual who has the capacity to love

Demonstrate appropriate displays of affection

Share how you have personally experienced community

Develop a loving relationship with God

Develop integrity in all your dealings

Learn good communication skills – both speaking and listening

Pray for God to give you love for others, especially the unlovable.

Work on issues from your past which prevent you from giving and receiving love from others.

Pastors need loving relationships too. Too often pastors are lonely people – so many working relationships and so few friends.

c/Focus on Growing People

Loving relationships is a function of spiritual growth as people grow in their love for God and each other

Loving relationships requires a transformational shift from thinking that it's all about me to that I'm here for God's glory and that God is glorified through loving relationships

Unless Christian community is being developed at the grassroots level, things done to develop community at the large group level will begin to have a hollow ring and may be perceived as hype.

d/Assimilate New People Extraordinarily Well

New people will be the most likely to remember what it was like to be a 'new' person

Help newcomers establish relationships within the church. Unless a person can develop 5-7 relationships within the church, they probably will not stay.

Invite them personally to socials

Assign sponsors to help in the connectedness process

Invite them to the newcomers class

e/Vision Cast for Connection

We must constantly remind those in our small groups and serving teams not to become an ingrown clique. "Our secret weapon for reaching people is you".

Be on watch for people standing alone. It's a tricky task to master because although people long to be connected they really don't want to be singled out, put on the spot or assaulted. They want opportunities to connect if they desire it, but they want the option of an 'out' as well.

Teach about the importance of relationships. Teach in applicable ways the "one-anothers" of scripture.

Have people from small groups share how they are experiencing relationships/community

Celebrate the wins

f/Shape Committees and Ministry Teams to be More Relational

g/Organize and Reorganize

Some people resist organizing for connection, feeling it should just be spontaneous or it will feel forced and impersonal. But what you have to realize is that a lack of organization or vision for connecting others can actually create the most unfriendly, uncaring of communities because that's where people drift if not led proactively the other way.

Welcoming Teams, Assimilation Plans, New Members Tea, Small Group Integration, Ministry Involvement.

h/Create Connection Points

Connection through compassion

Connection through pain

Connection through service

Connection through affinity

i/Involve People Early

Have people feel involved, needed and valued

j/Remember that the church will drift back into individualism without a continued re-focus on connectedness.