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a resource for:
Ministers and Mentors

Are You Intentional?



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

Counseling and Family Services

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Are You Intentional?

*“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:”
Hebrews 10:24*

God calls us into relationship. First into relationship with Him, our Heavenly Father. And then into relationships with each other within families, friends, our church family, and other settings. We are called to be members “*one of another*” (*Rom. 12:5*) as we walk through life. These relationships can provide a deep sense of encouragement and support while also being a key source of help and challenge in our spiritual growth. Such deep relationships require intentionality and trust, and the need for these characteristics can be part of the reason as to why this commitment is a step too far for many of us. Four common hindrances to relationships are highlighted below.

1. I am too busy.

The number one reason given by most when asked why they do not engage in spiritually challenging relationships is simply the busyness of life. We live in a society that is busy and seems to be getting busier. There has been a marked increase in the amount of things we can do, the information we can process, and the opportunities around us. Good things...and yet, things that can distract us from some of the priorities God’s Word calls us to do. Consider some of the points below:

- Do a time-spent analysis by listing out the hours of the day for a week and how you spend these moments. How much time was spent with relationships?
- Where do spiritually challenging relationships fall in the list of priorities you feel called to?
- Is there a way you can build out relationships in the midst of your daily activities? Can you go grocery shopping together with a good friend? Can you work together with someone on household projects, using these times to challenge and encourage each other while also getting work done?
- How can technology aid (instead of inhibit) relationships? For example, can you turn a commute home into an accountability call or can you use encouraging texts to share scripture with others?

2. Relationships are hard work.

Relationships are work. No matter what the level of commitment or intended outcome, they will require work and maintenance. It is and always will be easier to do nothing. To engage well in a healthy, challenging, spiritually encouraging relationship will require you to be willing to be vulnerable with others, to open yourself up to sharing and to learning, and to sometimes address things in the past you would rather let lie in silence. Yet, the call of the church is to engage with each other (*John 13:34-35, Rom. 12:5, Heb. 10:24*). We will work for something we find value in. And we will put great effort into something if we think we will receive gain from it.

- Where are you investing most of your effort right now?
- What gain have you received from relationships in the past? List out specific examples.

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3. I've had bad experiences in the past.

Some will avoid going deeper with relationships because they have been hurt in the past. Perhaps they reached out and bared their soul, but the concern was not reciprocated. Perhaps they were the victims of gossip or inappropriate sharing by others. These are real and present pains in the lives of many and it should challenge us to be wise in how we are conducting our relationships. Yet, if we are making excuses which keep us out of relationships, we must be careful that we do not let the past dictate the potential future. Many a good deed has gone undone because of bitter memories of the past. Paul calls us to forget *“those things which are behind and reach(ing) forth unto the things which are before”* (Phil. 3:13). Applying this lesson can help us to not be held captive by the past but realize the opportunity which new relationships offer.

- Am I letting past relationships limit future relationships?
- What am I potentially missing due to this?
- What will it take for me to once again engage in relationships?

4. None of my peer group are interested in such things.

A final reason individuals avoid healthy, challenging relationships is the belief that no one else is interested in such things. “I am the only one in my peer group or church family who cares about going deeper.” However, survey after survey have shown that other individuals are thinking the same thing you are. Older individuals desire to engage in mentorship but do not believe anyone would care what they have to say. Younger individuals desire mentorship but do not believe that anyone has time for them. These unspoken assumptions can keep healthy, encouraging and healing relationships separated. Be willing to take the initiative and step out in creating an environment of relationship within your church family. Share with your church leadership your desire to have a mentor or to mentor others so that leadership can help make potential connections. Prayerfully be willing to sit down by someone at lunch or grab coffee with someone, seeking purely to learn from each other and grow together. There are many who desire this level of relationship. Let the Spirit connect and begin His work.

The hindrances above can go to great lengths in keeping us from relationships which God may want to use to encourage and build us up on our spiritual walk. Reflect on these barriers. Have they been evident in your life? Let us take hold of the promises of Scripture and lean on *“one another”* to strengthen and challenge each other to a deeper walk with our Lord. For further discussion, study, and application in the area of mentoring and intentional relationships, please review the resources at www.accounseling.org/mentoring.

