

# SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

*Life is Better Connected.*

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (niv) Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: If either of them falls down one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.*

When we do life **with** others, we are able to experience mutual support, especially in times of need, and we also multiply our capacity to be fruitful (a good return for their labour).

## THE LOCAL CHURCH THRIVES ON THIS CONNECTEDNESS.

We thrive personally when we are **connected** into meaningful relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ **in the local church**. I love how this passage continues:

*Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken (v11-12).*

Here we see the presence of a third person! Of course, we know this refers to the Lord.

It is our bond in Christ together that is unique, making the church like no other human organisation or human bond.

In our world with isolation, loneliness, and relational breakdown increasing, the church can shine and offer that unique fellowship and relational connection where ***Christ is present!***

**Ways in which the local church has helped me and how we may help others to come into the fellowship of the local church.**

**This centres around the concept of *hospitality*.**

**GK: *philoneksía*** (*phílos*, "friend" and *xenos*, "a stranger") - properly, warmth (friendliness) shown to strangers.

## **SHOW INTEREST IN PEOPLE**

Welcome strangers as a **priority**. Is that challenging? Yes! But people need us.

## **FOUR OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME.**

1. **Insecurity.** *Step across the fear threshold and just have a go.*  
*(1 John 4:18 Perfect love drives out fear.)*

2. **Indifference**
3. **Prejudice**
4. **Self Interest**

Jesus addresses these three in the parable of the good Samaritan. (*Luke 10:25-37*)

When we prioritise showing interest in and welcoming the stranger, **we step into Jesus shoes** – because that is where He walks; that is where He goes.

I.E. - Zacchaeus (*Luke 19:10*)

- The Samaritan woman at the well (*John 4:4-26*)
- Holy Spirit (*John 14:26*) advocate, helper, comforter. *paráklētos*, adjective, "called to one's aid, to come along-side." He will work through us to do this.

## **INVITE PEOPLE INTO YOUR LIVES**

Be determined to *learn* the art of **hospitality**.

*It's not about showy entertaining. It's about sharing your life, your love; sharing Christ;*

**Including people in your circles of fellowship. E.G. CONNECT GROUPS.**

*Hebrews 13:1-2* Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. <sup>2</sup>Do not forget to **show** hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

## **SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS**

**Barnabas** encouraged Paul and helped launch him into his ministry.

**Definition:** Son of encouragement. (*Acts 9:27*)

*Ephesians 4:29 (niv).* Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but **only what is helpful for building others up** according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

## **MODEL SERVING CHRIST**

Be an example to the believers.

*“Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity” (1Timothy 4:12).*

**Loving and serving Christ is contagious.  
We become who we hang around.**

Let me say that being connected into the life and fellowship of the local church takes effort.

We must be intentional about it; active in pursuing it; and devoted to it.

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching **and to fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).*

And it's got to be face-to-face. **Facebook** is a good tool, but no substitute for face-to-face. (Same for Sunday worship)

**Life is better connected.**