



TRANSIT

RELATIONSHIPS | GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY SHAWN JOHNSON

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

Everyone wants better relationships, but what most commonly stands in the way of you getting to know people on a deeper level?

SHARE

Welcome to “Transit.”

We all want to go somewhere. To get there, we have to make a purposeful decision to begin the journey. When we travel, we take different vehicles – cars, planes, subway systems, buses, bikes, etc. Each of the vehicles serves a distinct purpose in moving us closer to where we want to go. As we purposefully take a journey together through “Transit,” the hope is that we can discover how we can grow closer to God through prayer, studying God’s word, relationships, serving, giving, and sharing our story about what Jesus Christ has done in our lives. As we talk about and experience these spiritual disciplines, we hope you realize that the power is not in the vehicles themselves, but in the subject of our affection, which is Jesus Christ. We can’t do anything to earn God’s love or salvation, but there are real ways we can cultivate a thriving relationship with God.

The truth is that God is the one who finds us, but he also promises in his word, that if we are serious about seeking him, He will be found (Jeremiah 29:13-14). No matter where in the world we might be, there is God. God is omnipresent, meaning he is “everywhere at the same time.” So there is no situation here on earth in which we cannot turn to God in our time of need. He will be there. David understood this and precisely why he proclaimed:

Psalm 139:7-10

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

If you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, God is with you and the Holy Spirit lives inside of you. You are an adopted son or daughter of the King and your identity is found in Christ Jesus, not in past mistakes or failures. With this in mind, we can boldly approach God and cultivate a closer relationship with Him. Whether you are brand new in your relationship with God or have been following Christ for decades, we hope this series can remind you of God’s incredible love and the ways we can ignite or re-ignite a more authentic relationship with God and each other.

Relationships can make or break us. The people we allow to get close or the people we choose to get close to will affect us in life-changing ways. Each of us can think of relationships we have that build us up, encourage us and make us better. We can also think of those relationships that tear us down, dishearten us and seem to lead us off course in what God has for our lives. God has much to say to us about those we allow close to us.

There is a big difference between those we are purposely ministering to by sharing the gospel, serving, or helping, and those we allow to counsel and speak into our lives. We are called to engage the world around us, to get to know our neighbors and to show the love of Christ to everyone. We are not called to just listen to anyone's advice, counsel or opinions. God makes it clear that those we allow to speak into our lives should be wise, honest and godly people who want the best for us.

Let's read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, Proverbs 12:26 and Proverbs 13:20:

From your own life experience, have you ever found yourself being brought down by walking with foolish people? How did you find yourself surrounded by those friends? What did you learn from that experience?

Think of a wise and encouraging friend. Have they helped you grow wise? If so, how?

GROW

Throughout this week's message, Shawn talked about the concept of choosing our direction. We all understand the implications of this principle. For example, if we want drive to Los Angeles, we understand that there is a choice to make. Do we take just any road in hopes it will lead there or do we choose to follow the road signs that lead us there? Yes, we can take roads in every direction, but each road is taking us closer or farther away from where we want to go. When it comes to your closest friends, are they encouraging your walk with Christ? Are they going down the same road in the same direction? Are your closest friends the kind of person you want to become? God wants us to love, reach, and care for everyone, but has some specific things to say about our closest relationships.

Let's read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

D.E. Garland in the New American Commentary sheds light on any confusion:

The Corinthian Christians were surrounded by pagan values and practices. Just because they have been sealed by the Spirit does not mean that they can be careless about their relationships and associations with the world.

Paul's clarification in 1 Cor 5:9–10 makes it clear, however, that he is not asking them to shun pagans altogether. He assumes that they will shop in the market (1 Cor 10:25) and encourages them to go to dinner at a pagan's home if they are invited and disposed to go (1 Cor 10:26). But he does want to form their spiritual identity so that they are distinguished from the pagan society surrounding them and will realign their values accordingly. Christians hold values dear that others reject. They must not allow themselves to be hitched to the same yoke as those whose beliefs are hostile to Christian faith.

Paul makes it clear that we are to be friends with people who are not Christ followers and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus who associated with everyone, (1 Cor. 10:25-26) but not to be "unequally yoked" or hitched in the same direction. Have you ever felt this tension in your relationships?

Have you ever had to make a tough decision relationally because of your relationship with Jesus?

MOVE

As we meditate on scripture in private, it will be hard to hide in public. Public life is nothing. When we decide to follow Jesus and make him Lord of our lives, our identity changes and the direction our lives are headed changes. We now desire to live in a way that pleases God. At times, pleasing God means not pleasing everyone. If we are in a relationship that isn't biblical or God-honoring we need to make a decision. If we aren't surrounded by any godly friends or encouraging relationships, we need to make a decision to start building the right ones.

Proverbs 14:7 says that we need to “escape quickly from the company of fools...” so are we in foolish relationships with people who aren't pursuing God and hinder our pursuit? Some of us will need to break up, move out, change jobs and have tough conversations. Others of us will need to start dating God's way, make a commitment, or do the right thing with integrity. If you find yourself going in the wrong direction right now, take heart and know that God will meet you where you are, no matter how far down the road of the wrong direction you feel.

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

When we start to build the right relationships and walk away from the wrong ones, we will start to be surrounded by people we can confess sin to, people who will listen, encourage and pray for us. We shouldn't be surprised that we all struggle with sin; that is precisely why the body of Christ, the people of God are so important – because we all can carry each other's burdens and lift one another up when we fall. It is critical that each of us has someone we can confess our sins to and who will pray for us. At Red Rocks Church, this is why we put such emphasis on life groups. As imperfect, clumsy and awkward meeting new people can be, we are designed to do life together with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We were created to experience God's plan for our lives ... with God's people in our lives.

Do you currently have an accountability friend who knows the questions to ask you and knows specifically how to pray for your weaknesses?

If you don't, are you willing to pray about it and maybe search out a trusted and godly person who would be willing to be that person for you?

If you are in a small group already and still have room to grow, are there any people who come to mind you could invite to the small group?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

If you are in Christ, you are a new creation, the new is here.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!