

HOW TO CREATE COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

Johnny Farr (*Minister to Married Adults*)



BELONGING: A profound connection that comes from being known, loved, safe, and having a shared purpose.

KNOWN: Expressed by knowing their name, family dynamic, testimony, passions, & spiritual condition. (*Philippians 2:4*)

- You must have discipline and mechanisms to gather and retain this information.
- Saying, “I’m bad with people’s names,” isn’t an excuse.
- Move conversations from casual to personal to spiritual to Gospel.

LOVED: Expressed by showing up in their world dependably and randomly. (*Romans 12:10, Hebrews 10:24-25*)

- Earn the right to be heard by your ministry of presence.
- Everyone has masks they wear. They will take theirs off if you go first.

SAFE: Expressed by creating a trusting, safe place for others to be vulnerable and transparent. (*James 5:16, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10*)

- Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another, “What! You too? I thought I was the only one.”
- Trust is the most valuable commodity in a relationship. It takes a long time to gain but can be lost in a moment.
- Jesus can use your greatest weakness as your greatest witness.

SHARED PURPOSE: Expressed by a persistent invitation for them to serve using their spiritual gifts. (*1 Peter 4:10, Psalm 100:2*)

- You own what you help create.
- If you think watching the “game” is enjoyable, wait until you start playing.
- If I am to love my church, I must not be an idle member, but I must work for her and with her.



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SPIRITUAL CONDITIONS

1. COLD to the Gospel

Individuals in this condition are indifferent or apathetic towards the Gospel message. They may have little to no interest in spiritual matters or may even reject the idea of faith altogether. It is crucial to approach these individuals with love, patience, and a genuine desire to understand their perspective. By building relationships, demonstrating the love of Christ, and sharing the Gospel's transformative power, we can help thaw their hearts and open them to the truth.

2. CURIOUS ABOUT THE GOSPEL

People in this condition exhibit a growing interest in spiritual matters. They may have questions, seek answers, or express a desire to explore faith. Engaging in meaningful conversations, providing biblical guidance, and addressing their inquiries with wisdom and grace is essential. By nurturing their curiosity and providing them with a solid foundation of biblical knowledge, we can help deepen their understanding and move them closer to embracing the Gospel.

3. CONNECTED TO CHRIST, THE CHURCH, COMMUNITY, AND A CAUSE

Individuals in this condition are committed to follow Christ and have established connections within the body of believers. They actively participate in church activities, engage in fellowship, and serve in various capacities. However, it is important to help them grow beyond mere involvement to developing a deeper, personal relationship with Christ. Encouraging them to prioritize spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, Bible study, and worship can foster a more intimate connection with God and further their spiritual maturity.

4. COMPLACENT (THE DANGER ZONE)

People in this condition may have reached a level of spiritual contentment or satisfaction, leading to a sense of complacency. They may have plateaued in their faith, lacking the motivation or desire to pursue further growth. Recognizing the danger of complacency and gently challenging individuals in this state is crucial. By encouraging them to seek new challenges, engage in discipleship relationships, and pursue ongoing spiritual development, we can help them overcome complacency and reignite their passion for Christ.

5. COMMISSIONED TO MAKE DISCIPLE-MAKERS

Individuals in this condition have reached a level of spiritual maturity where they understand the importance of making disciples who also make disciples. They actively engage in the multiplication movement by investing in others and equipping them to grow in their faith. These individuals have embraced their role in fulfilling the Great Commission and are committed to spreading the Gospel and nurturing spiritual growth in others. Supporting and empowering these individuals by providing them with resources, mentorship, and opportunities to lead and disciple others is crucial.

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Understanding the various spiritual conditions individuals may find themselves in allows us to tailor our approach to leading them toward greater spiritual maturity. By recognizing the importance of nurturing individuals from being cold to the Gospel to curiosity, connection, and beyond complacency, we can guide them toward a commission to make disciple-makers. As we strive to cause everyone to be fully mature in Christ, let us rely on the wisdom, strength, and energy that Christ powerfully works within us.

 <p>COLD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't own a Bible • Openly skeptic, atheist or agnostic • Closed off or hostile to religion • Hurt by Christians and/or the church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lives for "self" • Against church • Enjoys sin without conviction
 <p>CURIOUS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might not own a Bible or doesn't care to know where it is • Isn't worried about eternal consequences • Attends for friends/fun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has lots of questions about God and the Bible • On the fence • Not convicted of their sin • Doesn't understand religious jargon
 <p>CONNECTED</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior • Baptized • Member of a local church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participates in church activities, engages in fellowship, and serves in various capacities • Has a spiritually disciplined life • Spiritual fruit is obvious
 <p>COMPLACENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads the Bible but depends on a leader to guide them • Apathetic faith • Spiritual fruit is hard to see • Does not have a spiritually disciplined life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not take an active role as a spiritual leader in their family • Rarely or never confesses sin and lives with pride out front
 <p>COMMISSIONED</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies the Bible regularly on their own • Shares the Gospel with peers • Practices spiritual disciplines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges their peers to grow • Boldly confesses their sin/fears/insecurities • Makes disciples who make disciples

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STEWARDED YOUR INFLUENCE

1. CULTIVATE GENUINE RELATIONSHIPS

Start by building authentic relationships with the people God has placed in your life. Show genuine care, love, and interest in their lives. Invest time in getting to know them, their interests, and their struggles. This lays the foundation for trust and opens the door for deeper conversations.

2. LISTEN AND ASK QUESTIONS

Be an attentive listener and ask thoughtful questions. Show genuine curiosity about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This demonstrates that you value their perspective and creates a safe space for open dialogue.

3. SHARE PERSONAL STORIES

Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words. Be willing to share your own experiences, struggles, and victories. Vulnerability fosters deeper connections and allows others to see your faith in action. Share how your relationship with God has impacted your life and brought hope, peace, and purpose.

4. INTRODUCE SPIRITUAL TOPICS

Once a personal connection has been established, gently introduce spiritual topics into conversations. Look for natural opportunities to discuss faith, values, and beliefs. Share how your faith has shaped your worldview and decisions. Ask open-ended questions that invite others to reflect on their spiritual journey.

5. BE A REFLECTIVE LISTENER

As conversations become more spiritual, actively listen to the thoughts and beliefs of others. Seek to understand their perspective without judgment. Reflect on their thoughts and feelings to show that you genuinely hear and respect their viewpoint. This creates a space for deeper exploration and a mutual understanding.

6. SHARE THE GOSPEL

When appropriate, share the Gospel message with clarity and love. Share how Jesus has transformed your life and offers the hope of salvation through faith in Him. Use personal stories, biblical passages, and relevant examples to communicate the message effectively. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading.

7. PRAY FOR OPPORTUNITIES

Consistently pray for opportunities to move conversations towards the Gospel. Ask God to open doors and provide divine appointments. Pray for wisdom, discernment, and boldness to share the truth in love. Trust in God's timing and guidance throughout the process.

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8. FOLLOW UP AND DISCIPLE

After sharing the Gospel, follow up with individuals to see how they process the message. Offer to answer any questions they may have and provide resources for further exploration. If they express interest, offer to walk alongside them in their spiritual journey, providing discipleship and support.

9. BE PATIENT AND TRUST GOD

Remember that the work of transformation is ultimately in God's hands. Be patient and trust in His timing and sovereignty. Recognize that your role is to faithfully sow seeds and trust God to bring about growth and change in people's hearts.

10. CONTINUAL GROWTH AND LEARNING

Commit to continual growth in your faith and knowledge of God's Word. Seek opportunities to deepen your understanding of the Gospel and develop your ability to articulate it effectively. Stay connected to a community of believers who can support and encourage you in your journey of stewarding relationships for the sake of the Gospel.

By implementing this strategy, you can be a good steward of the influence and relationships God has given you. Moving conversations from casual, to personal, to spiritual and then to the Gospel, allows you to share the transformative power of Christ's love and bring others into a personal relationship with Him. Remember to rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance, trust in God's timing, and faithfully sow seeds of truth in the lives of those around you.