

From 1986 to 1990, Frank Reed was held hostage in a Lebanon cell. For months at a time, Reed was blindfolded, living in complete darkness or chained to a wall and kept in absolute silence. On one occasion, he was moved to another room, and, although blindfolded, he could sense others in the room. Yet it was three weeks before he dared peek out to discover he was chained next to Terry Anderson and Tom Sutherland.

Although he was beaten, made ill, and tormented, Reed felt most the lack of anyone caring. He said in an interview with Time, "Nothing I did mattered to anyone. I began to realize how withering it is to exist with not a single expression of caring around [me].... I learned one overriding fact: caring is a powerful force. If no one cares, you are truly alone."

Our greatest model for loving others is found in the example of Jesus Christ and how He loves us.

³ *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort.* ⁴ *He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.* 1 Corinthians 1:3-4 NLT

The fact is that all humans have a need for comfort or comforting. Notice the pattern that is laid out in this scripture. God comforts us so that we can comfort others. It is simple and straight forward. We are to give back to others what God has given us.

⁵ *May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus.* ⁶ *Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

⁷ *Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.* Romans 15:5-7 NLT

It is God who gives us patience and encouragement to help us live in harmony and to accept one another.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, "*So encourage each other and build each other up. . .*"

24 times in the New Testament, Christfollowers are instructed to "greet one another." This is much more than saying hello. This is saying that we are to deeply know and express caring concern to others.

All of these scriptures suggest that people have needs that can only be met by other human beings.

Jesus was very direct about this in John 13. After washing the disciple's feet, a job reserved for a household servant, He instructs them and us with these words,

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.”³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” John 13:34-35 NLT

I would like to focus on 10 reasons you and I need to be in community with other people. Basically there are 10 human needs that everyone has and I believe they can be met best by being in a healthy relationship with others.

Wherever you go or whatever kind of community you find yourself in these ten basic needs will be evident.

Comfort: Giving strength and hope; easing the grief of others.

Be Kind

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Because we live in a culture riddled with pain, it is imperative that we learn and practice the loving ministry of comforting troubled people. Medical treatment may bring relief from physical injury or illness but for emotional pain it takes something more.

For hurt from abuse, the death of a loved one, a business failure or a failed marriage it takes a different treatment. According to the Bible we are to “mourn with those who mourn.” In the Beatitudes we read, “Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.”

We should learn to comfort others. Be Kind

Attention/Care: Paying attention to the needs of others.

Be Interested

The members (of the body) should have the same care for one another. 1 Corinthians 12:25 NASB

When we are kids the most special people to us are the ones who enter our world and show us attention. It was people who came to our games and recitals. It was the adult who got down on the floor and played a silly game with us. It may have been a teacher, a coach, a pastor or a relative. But do you remember how it made you feel?

Everyone will need some attention in their life. Jesus paid attention to us by leaving His heavenly home and coming to earth to attend to our spiritual needs. He is our model always.

We should learn to pay attention to others. Be Interested.

Acceptance: Deliberate and ready reception. Receiving willingly.

Be Open

⁷ *Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.*
Romans 15:5-7 NLT

We have a deep need to be accepted. We feel this in our marriages, our workplaces and at school. We all want to be accepted by somebody, warts and all.

Jesus modeled this for us as well. He died for us when we were yet sinners. In our relationships with others let us find a way to accept what we can. I am not talking about accepting or approving of a sinful lifestyle but I talking about loving others especially those around us in our lives.

We should learn to accept others: Be open

Appreciation: Recognize with gratitude, communicate with words genuine gratefulness

Be Thankful

“Now I praise you.” 1 Corinthians 11:2 NKJV

Again every person on this earth responds to genuine words of appreciation. God modeled this by calling us friends, sons and daughters, joint-heirs and His people.

We should practice gratitude to those around us. Be Thankful

Support: Coming alongside and helping, assisting and providing for **Be There**

² *Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.* ³ *If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.* Galatians 6:2 NLT

Times of high stress can produce a real sense of needing support. There are numerous things that can and do cause stress in our lives. Sometimes that stress accelerates during an unexpected crisis. It is at these times in our lives that people feel alone, isolated, and often even without hope.

We should provide support to the hurting. Be There

Encouragement: Urging others forward in their faith. **Be Positive**

“So encourage each other and build each other up. . .” 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NLT

Discouragement is a very common human affliction. We often feel it when life seems to be giving us more than we can bear. Do you know a ministry I think some of you ought to have? I think some of us could just float around after and before a service and encourage people we don’t even know.

(Don't talk to anyone you know for the first five minutes after a service)

I remember hearing a story about a man who had missed church for a number of weeks. The preacher had often called him and asked where he was, but the man kept putting the preacher off. Finally, one day, the preacher stopped by for a visit on a cold winter day.

The man was sitting in front of his fireplace and welcomed the preacher and tried to engage him in conversation. However, the minister didn't say much. He just walked over to the fireplace, pulled one of the logs away from the flame - and then went and sat down. They sat there in silence for the longest time, watching the fire. And as they watched, the log that sat off by itself, the fire on it began to smolder and then it went out. The preacher and the man sat for a long time looking into the fireplace. The pastor didn't say anything and then the man said "OK, I'll be at church next Sunday."

Every now and then I encounter a person who things they don't need the church. Well maybe if you could think outside of yourself the church needs you. People need you to love and encourage them.

Affection: Communicating care and closeness through touch and affirming words

Be Loving

⁸ *We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too.* 1 Thessalonians 2:8 NLT

The first nine months of our lives in the womb we are enveloped but human touch. When we are born we reach out to a mother or father and crave touch. Kids will cry all night wanting to be held. God created that need in each of us. A touch from someone else is life giving. Living with affection is devastating to a relationship and to the isolated person.

We should learn to intentionally communicate with appropriate touch and affirming words. Be loving

Respect: Value others and regard them highly. Esteem them and honor them

Be Honoring

Respect everyone, and love your Christian brothers and sisters. 1 Peter 2:17 NLT

Scripture is very specific about respecting people. We are to respect and honor our parents, the aged and governing rulers. (some of you need to think about that ignored biblical principle) We are to show honor to whom honor is due. We respect others privacy, property and time.

We should learn to practice respect. Be honoring

Security: Freedom from harm, danger and fear. Confident harmony in relationships.

Be Protective

*So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.*¹⁸ *Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear.* 1 John 4:17-18 NLT

We all feel security when we feel safe and sense that we will be provided for and cared for. God provides that most of all when we are in relationship with Him but we also are to watch out for those around us.

Those we love may feel satisfied when their needs are being currently met. But they feel secure when they have confidence that their future needs will be met. Children are satisfied after you provide a meal but they are secure when they believe that your love included their future needs as well.

We should say with our lives that we are committed to love and be there. Be protective

Approval: Affirmation and expressing a favorable opinion

Be Approving

*If you serve Christ with this attitude, you will please God, and others will approve of you, too.*¹⁹ *So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.* Romans 14:18-19 NLT

Even Jesus on the Mt. of Transfiguration needed to hear words of approval from the Father. “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” All of us have this need to feel approval from those that profess to love us.

Scorn and disdain is quite the opposite of approval and living with that can be an awful existence.

Let us commit to giving affirmation to those we love. Be approving

Author and teacher, Dr. Howard Hendricks tells the story of a young man who strayed from the Lord but was finally brought back by the help of a friend who really loved him. When there was full repentance and restoration, Dr. Hendricks asked this Christian how it felt away from the Lord. The young man said it seemed like he was out at sea, in deep water, deep trouble, and all his friends were on the shore hurling biblical accusations at him about justice, penalty, and wrong.

“But, there was one Christian brother who actually swam out to get me and would not let me go. I fought him, but he pushed aside my fighting, grasped me, put a life jacket around me, and took me to shore. By the grace of God, he was the reason I was restored. He would not let me go.”

I read recently about a woman who was driving from Alberta, Canada to the Yukon. She didn't know that you never travel that way alone, especially in a rundown Honda, Civic. So she set off on a road usually reserved for four wheel drive trucks. Eventually she found herself in a truck stop. Two truckers invited her to join them, and since the place was so small she felt obligated to

oblige. "Where are you headed?" one of the truckers asked, to which she replied, "Whitehorse." "In that little Civic? No way! The pass is dangerous in weather like this." "Well, I'm determined to try" was her naïve response. "Then I guess we're going to have to hug you," the trucker suggested, to which she replied, "There's no way I'm going to let you touch me." The trucker laughed, "Not like that. We'll put one truck in front of you and one in the rear. That way we'll get you through the mountains." That entire day she followed two red dots in the fog in front of her, as the two trucks hugged her through the dangerous pass as she made her journey. That's what the right companions will do for our spiritual journey.