

Talk It Over

Practice!
(Week 2)
Pursue Relationally

SMALL TALK

1. Have you ever experienced someone taking the first step to reach out to support and encourage you while you were hurting?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ John 13:34-35; 20:21; Romans 5:8; 12:10; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:21.** How do these verses relate to the life practice: "pursue relationally"? Which line or phrase captures your attention and why?
3. **READ Genesis 4:9.** What is the correct answer to Cain's self defensive question? **READ 1 John 3:11-18.** What does John say about Cain, hate, and love? How do we know what love is?

GETTING PERSONAL

4. Is your chip bag full or empty? (Have someone explain the "share your chips" illustration). Did God put any chips in your bag this past week? Did you share any chips this past week?
5. What do the Life Practices "Devote Daily" and "Pursue Relationally" look like in your life? What gets in the way of your progress in these practices?
6. What does it look like to move from being a "second chair" person to a "first chair" person? (Have someone who heard the message describe the three chairs illustration.)

Moving from second chair to first chair does not look like "trying harder" to follow the rules so that you can experience more of God's favor. That is not what the Life Practices are all about. Moving from second chair to first chair happens when we are so moved by God's favor already, so filled up completely with his love, that our conduct is fueled by the realization that God has devoted himself to us so exhaustively that we can do nothing other than respond with gratitude and love. Love is made complete.

*This is the "good news"! Too many people are still trying to earn God's approval, and favor. Devoting Daily is not that! It is coming to Jesus and filling up to overflowing with his love already freely given through Jesus.
Do you view your life as an attempt to earn God's approval, or do you view your life as*

a thank you expressing your love and gratitude to God for his grace already given to you? This is an important question. Only when we feel "SO loved" and "SO" welcomed and embraced by God will we then feel compelled to love others and extend that grace and love to others.

1 John 4:11–12 (NIV)** Dear friends, **since God so loved us**, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, **God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

MAKING PROGRESS

7. What is something God has taught been teaching you lately out of our Devote Daily practice? Can you name a few people you are pursuing relationally? How can we be praying for you?

November 8, 2020

PRACTICE!

Life Practice 2: Pursue Relationally:

Practice these 5 life practices that fuel a thriving and contagious faith in Jesus:

1. Devote Daily
2. Pursue Relationally
3. Guide Biblically
4. Live Authentically
5. Engage Missionally.

What do you remember about Tuesday? Voting stresses? Some other stress? What I remember is a beautiful sunrise with rainbow over Mingus Mountain [show picture].

Every day we have a choice to make, to look for and see the love of God, or ignore God's love and fixate on the hate. Light, color, and beauty, or darkness, drabness, and distress.

My Tuesday morning was refreshing. My soul restored. It's a good thing too, because my Tuesday was filled with battles. The challenges hit hard. I needed to remember that God is still in control. Life in him is still beautiful.

A sense of wellbeing came out of my Life Practice # 1: Devote Daily, not based on the news or circumstances around me.

If you heard last week's message, I hope you took some steps this past week in this Life Practice. Devote Daily! This is probably the most important life practice we can have. Life doesn't come from checking our devotion off on our list. Life comes from Jesus. Devote daily! It is life giving.

Today we are talking about Life Practice # 2 Pursue Relationally.

I. God SHOWED His pursuing LOVE

1 John 4:9 (NIV) This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

How did God show his love? He sent his Son to pursue us relationally! He made relationships and showed us what love looks like and then gave us something bigger still... a new life we learn how to live THROUGH HIM. He goes on to explain further.

II. God is the SOURCE of pursuing love

1 John 4:10 (NIV) This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

“This is love.” John says. Then we expect a definition to follow. But he gives a strange definition. The definition is in the opposite direction of RELIGION approach. This is love: Not that we loved God. This isn’t love. The definition of love is God sending his Son. That’s love. And it changes something in us if we will let it. God provides us love! Love by a new definition, from the source. And we aren’t the source of love.

Let that sink in. Do you want to be more loving? God is the source. And once we connect with that source and truly experience God’s love, watch out. We change.

1 John 4:11 (NIV) Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

The word “so” is what clinches the phrase and sticks to our soul. It’s like God said “You are SO welcome.” The word SO makes it feel all the more meaningful. It’s more than a phrase, it’s an

attitude and posture! And once we experience it, it changes our tone, attitude, and posture toward others.

“God SO loved us.” And when we are SO welcomed we extend God’s invitation, making others feel SO welcome.

III. When God’s love **SHOWS** through you, love is made **COMPLETE** in you

1 John 4:12 (NIV) No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Love is not complete if it settles only into a culdesac of receiving. The circuit of God’s love is completed only when we love one another—that was love’s intended purpose. Love is in giving! God shows up for people when his love shows through you. And it is in giving that we experience and receive love. God is otherwise invisible to people. Love is made more visible to ourselves when we love with Jesus love, and more visible to the receiver when we love with Jesus’ love. Loving one another completes God’s love and it allows others to see GOD’S Love. This is one of the most important ways we and others see God’s character: through our love, and his character made complete in us!

God’s love is made complete in us when it moves through us. His love feels vague and uncomplete and invisible to people until they experience God’s love through us. It will feel incomplete to you also till you love as he loves.

As we skip down to verse 19 we discover another important truth.

IV. You were loved first, so **LOVE FIRST**

1 John 4:19 (NIV) We love because he first loved us.

Who seeks first? God didn't wait for us to seek him first. He pursued us. He sent his son to us. God loves first.

CHIPS and CHAIRS are going to illustrate how we love.

A few weeks ago I illustrated how pursuing relationally is as easy as sharing your chips. Remember the sharing size bag of Salt and Vinegar chips? Our life is like that bag of chips we share from. Not the chips, but the bag. Our life is like the bag.

We Devote Daily to receive love and grace from God. Our life fills up. Then we share love and grace with others. He blesses us to be a blessing.

REFLECT:

1. Is your bag of chips empty?
2. Do you have chips in your bag that you can share?
3. Do you need to move from your chair?

Now let me connect Chips and Chairs.

Illustration:

Third Chair: Nonbeliever living for self-interests.

Second Chair: Believer living for self-interests.

First Chair: Follower living for God

Third chair people are not yet sure they believe God. Third Chair people are those in the audience, who need to take steps from wherever they are to where God wants them to be, but when they hear about the steps God wants them to take they are struggling to believe these are good steps to take, and they doubt God. They live for themselves rather than for God. They don't take the steps God describes.

Second chair people say they believe in God. They may even insist they believe in God, but they are just like third chair people. They don't want to take the steps God asks them to take. They'd

rather do what they want to do. It is the opposite of Jesus prayers, and the way Jesus lived. Jesus taught us to pray: “Your kingdom come, your will be done.” And Jesus also prayed “Not my will but yours be done”.

First chair people take the steps God wants them to take, they don't just believe, they PRACTICE these life practices, taking the steps Jesus taught us to take. !

There is often a progression moving from chair one to chair two then eventually to chair three. This is God's work of grace. But so often people get stuck in chair 2. **DANGER:** Second chair believers have more in common with third chair unbelievers than first chair believers.

If you are in chair two, your bag feels empty, and you have not been sharing your chips. Do you need to move from your chair?

Here's how: It looks less like “trying harder” and more like this wonderful realization that God loves us so much that we can do nothing other than respond with gratitude and love. Love is made complete in such the state of expressed gratitude. Don't try to earn your chips, just come to Jesus and let him fill up your bag. Devote Daily, then Pursue Relationally. Your life will begin to be an expression of thankful, loving response to love received. He So loves you, and so welcomed you, once you start to experience that and feel that, you will extend that to others.

Empty? Devote Daily and receive more chips of grace and love.

Share...it's time to move from your chair.