

Edify

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Deep Relationships

By Pastor Kevin Dibbley

In the Bible, the people of God are continually beckoned by God into a deeper relationship with Himself through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus exhorts his disciples to “abide in him” and makes it clear that they will never reach their potential as God’s people if they don’t.

He declares, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Intimacy with Christ is a reflection of the loving oneness of the Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that has existed for all eternity. The Triune God said in creating Adam and Eve, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26).



Being made in God’s likeness means, at least in part, that we are made for deep fellowship with God and with each other. The only thing that God said that was not good in creation was for Adam “to be alone.”

The goal of the Bible is to bring us into deep communion with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul says that it is the singular goal of his life: “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8). However, deepening friendship with Christ the head happens as we determine to love Him in community with one another.

The impulsive apostle Peter finally realized in his life that the key to everything was a deepening relationship with Christ in the context of a passionate pursuit of love for the people God had redeemed and placed in our lives. He writes, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.” C.S. Lewis said we ought to see relationships as God’s sovereign handiwork: “In friendship... we think we have chosen our peers. In reality a few years’ difference in the dates of our births, a few more miles between certain houses, the choice of one university over another... the accident of a topic being raised or not raised at a first meeting—any of these chances could have kept us apart. But, for a Christian, there are strictly speaking, no chances. A secret Master of Ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to his disciples, ‘Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you’ (John 15:16), can truly say to every group of friends, ‘Ye have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another.’”

Deep relationships with God and with one another are what we have been redeemed to enjoy. This is God’s will and it is God’s work.

Friends, your goal in life is to love God and to love one another earnestly from the heart. Everything else is simply the context for this. The gospel is the power that makes it possible in a deeply broken world. Where do deep relationships rank on your priority list?

Grow Together to Grow Deep

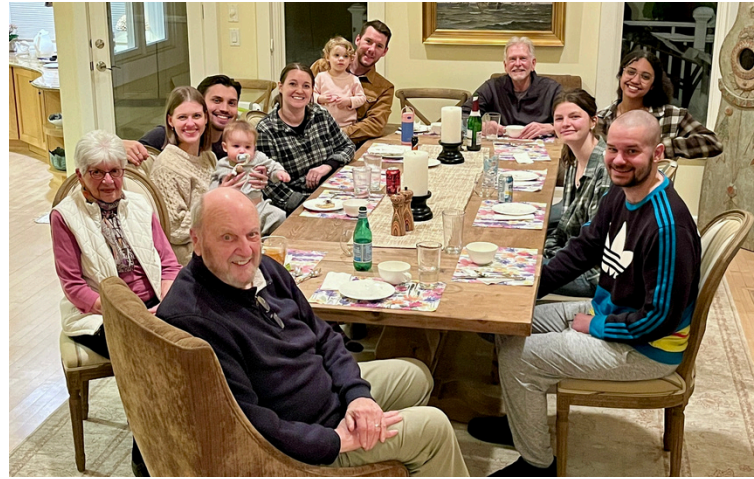
By Gina Eaton

Waterbrooke isn’t just a place we go on Sundays (to eat Dianna’s treats). Aside from worshipping our loving God, it’s where we make connections for spiritual relationships, growth and discipling. God created us for relationships but building deep ones requires time, intentionality, and a willingness to share life beyond the passing “hellos” and “see ya’s” in the narthex.

Our church is still small enough in numbers that interacting with believers of all ages and life experiences can easily occur. When someone purposes to intentionally connect, spiritual growth happens—especially when we seek out those who are very different from, or complement, us. Younger people gain rich wisdom and priceless guidance when seasoned iron sharpens their new iron.

Deep Relationships, continued

Senior believers are energized and inspired by the fresh perspectives and enthusiasm of the upcoming generations. Deepening relationships isn't about forcing interaction, it's about creating space for it in one's life. The recent Ministry Hub addition is doing what the planners prayed it would: bring people together and provide the vibrant atmosphere to greet, meet, eat, laugh, pray and grow with one another.



Fellowship across the generations. Clockwise from top: Bruce Eaton, Gwen Aigbobun, Julia Nerdahl, Brady Kirchner, Dale and Barb Evans, Sophia, Grant and Ellis Mueller, and Erica, Josh and Sylvia Hway.

Sitting together, being transparent about our joys and struggles, and listening carefully to each other edifies both people and can cultivate a sense of belonging and build relationships that last a lifetime and please God. When we intentionally cross the lines of age, background, and faith experience, we start to live out the fullness of being God's family. Every person brings something valuable to the table, and by learning from each other, encouraging each other, and walking alongside each other in faith, our spiritual lives grow richer and our church thrives and gains influence for Christ in the community and beyond.

Our desire is that everyone who comes to Waterbrooke will have many opportunities to become connected and easily find someone with which to go deeper: to be discipled, to disciple them or to disciple others. In his work, "Life Together", Deitrich Bonhoeffer emphasizes how Christian community is grounded in Christ and not in human ideals, and that true community arises through our union with Christ and our dependence on Him for fellowship with others. Christian community is literally a gift from God.

Books and Media

Building a Deeper Relationship With God

By Maria Matthys



Paul E. Miller's book, "*A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World*," is a timeless treasure that has resonated with readers deeply due to its simplicity, sincerity, and warmth. Readers will find the encouragement to turn from hardened cynicism to expectant hope as they reacquaint themselves with a very personal and approachable heavenly Father who desires to draw close to them in honest conversation. Its updated 2017 version includes prayers of lament and deeper instruction on the spiritual discipline of written prayers.



Men's Ministry

Faith, Friendship and the Occasional Power Tool

By Karen Kowalke

In a small church, most of us know each other's names and faces. But that isn't the same as really knowing one another. At Waterbrooke, there are plenty of easy and meaningful ways for men to connect, grow and encourage one another.

One long-standing opportunity is the Saturday morning Men's Bible Study, which has met faithfully for over 15 years. Led by Dan Esters, the group studies books of the Bible, prays together and stays connected throughout the week to support one another. Explaining why studying Scripture matters so deeply to him, Dan shares, "Jesus was committed to God's Word. Any faith untethered from it will eventually turn into self-worship. Knowing God and applying sound theology to everyday life—that's what we're after." Longtime participant Tim Graff agrees. "Our men's Bible study is so good that I don't mind getting up early on Saturday mornings," he says.

"I hate missing the encouraging fellowship and the open-ended discussions." Not to mention the coffee and doughnuts!

If getting up early on Saturdays isn't your thing, perhaps getting up even earlier on Friday morning is—with coffee again on hand to help! Another men's Bible study meets at Dunn Bros in Excelsior, where the group is currently working through the book of Romans. The goal is to grow in understanding and confidence in who each man is in Christ. As discussion facilitator Warren Campbell explains, "My hope is that as we find joy through the Word, we also develop an eagerness and a lasting sense of urgency to be God's people in the world." The men head off to work afterward, encouraged and equipped with guidance for their daily lives.

There's also an informal group that meets at varied restaurants around the Victoria area on Thursday evenings. Formed a few years ago by Kevin Dibbley, Mike Dokken and Tim Graff as an informal way to provide support and friendship, it might be a good match for men who enjoy deeper discussions around theology and Christian living while enjoying a meal together.



Waterbrooke visitor, Alex Streiff hooks the biggest lunger of the men's fishing event.

Responding to a desire for deeper connection among men in the church, Bruce Washington stepped forward to help create additional opportunities. Along with Casey Campbell, Raul Rehnberg and Dan Esters, he began to plan a variety of gatherings to meet that goal. Last fall included a football-watching night, and February kicked off 2026 with an ice-fishing event. Each gathering includes worship, fellowship, testimonies, food, and prayer. As Bruce puts it, "Life can be overwhelming at times, but together we can give one another hope in Christ and support each other through the struggles."

Less structured—but no less meaningful—are the work projects around the church. Whether digging drainage ditches, planting trees, repairing siding or painting the lower level floor, these projects become more than tasks when Christian men work side by side. Ralph Dvorak describes it simply: "It's shared effort, shared laughter, and shared faith."

Andy Turner adds, "It's a great way to meet other guys, and it's rewarding to use my skills to support a place that serves people I know and care about. Working together also strengthens my relationship with Jesus."

As Kevin Dibley reminds the men of Waterbrooke, "When you watch how Jesus did life and ministry, if anyone could have done it without others, you would think it would be him. But even when he was at the most excruciating moment of his life in the Garden of Gethsemane, he invited men to share his sorrows, join his prayers and fight with him to the finish line. It's plain and simple, biblically speaking: men need other men to stand firm, to grow in grace and to finish the race."

Men of Waterbrooke, if you'd like to join other men in any of these opportunities, reach out to Pastor Kevin or call the church office. We'd love to help you get connected.

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Andy Turner wields a mean caulk gun to patch up a corner of the farm house.

Senior Spotlight

A Full and Beautiful Life: Above the Clouds

By Dana S. Brumitt

What do military aircraft, county fairs, football, and butterflies all have in common? These are all ardent interests of Dale Evans. His adventuresome spirit, curiosity and natural talent has propelled him from one accomplishment to another, and at 89 he's not about to stop.

Dale grew up near Canton, Ohio in a house surrounded by woods. "Outdoor life was my thing." It was only logical that Dale joined scouting and enthusiastically went about earning all 21 badges to attain the highest ranking of Eagle Scout. "I cherish that experience because scouting teaches you the essential skills of life."

And then there were sports! Baseball, basketball, football, golf, track and aquatics —with constant coaching from his dad, he excelled at all of them. He even had the opportunity to try out for The Philadelphia Eagles football team.

But it was Dale's love for airplanes that won out. At the end of college he was wavering between a career in athletics or science. But everything changed when Dale was invited to apply for a position in naval aviation. He passed all the tests and immediately began a career in the United States Navy, piloting an A4-D attack aircraft. His aircraft carrier, the USS Midway, now a museum, is still sitting in the San Diego harbor. When Dale left the Navy he went on to fly for Northwest Airlines until a heart condition cut his career short after 25 years. He retired as a 747 captain.



Dale Evans in one of his favorite habitats.

At this stage of the game, I'm just waiting for the Lord to take me home. In the meantime, I'm very happy just being with my family.

Along the way, Dale had a spiritual re-awakening. When he was 12, a revival preacher had come to his church and delivered a "fire and brimstone" message so compelling he had walked to the front of the church and gave his life to Christ. But by the time he got to college his scientific studies caused him to question the Bible stories he heard in Sunday School. He considered himself an agnostic.

That changed after attending a Bible Study with Don Bierle called "Is the Bible True?" and Dale and his wife Barb started attending a Bible-believing church again. He rededicated his life to Christ and is now "blessed and grateful" to be at Waterbrooke under Kevin Dibley's preaching.

Dale Evans, continued

Retirement only broadened the scope of Dale's activities. He became the director of development for Chapel Hill Academy, managed flight services at Flying Cloud Airport, helped Southwest Christian High School find a site for a new facility and coached golf there. He also, quite randomly, began a personal project to visit every county fair in Minnesota—all 87 of them! (You'll have to ask him about that.) He also started raising Monarch butterflies.

His love for and commitment to his family takes center stage now. Dale and Barb raised 5 children and today their 8 grandkids and 15 great-grandkids fill their lives with joy. They are a close family, nurturing their deep relationship with regular conversations, Sunday family dinners and sporting events. Every phone call ends with a heartfelt "I love you."

Member Testimony

No Longer Lost

As told to Gina Eaton



Kenetta Fabing lives in peace and joy today.

I entered this world as the result of a rape and was placed for adoption. For my first 18 months, I lived with a kind foster family. They were faithful Christians. I know this because when I left their care, they wrote a letter of blessing over my life. Though I could not understand it then, God was already marking me as His.

My adoptive home, however, was a place of severe abuse. When I was eight years old, after an especially brutal incident that sent me to the ER, my Mother told me, "God doesn't love girls like you."

That night I had a dream. I was sitting alone on a school playground merry-go-round when someone approached. All I could see were his feet, wearing rope sandals, and the hem of a linen tunic. I knew it was Jesus. He sat with me. He played with me. He comforted me in my loneliness.

The next morning, I told my mother I had seen Jesus but she angrily rejected my story. Suddenly she went silent, staring past me, her face drained of color. I knew the presence of the Lord was standing behind me. That was my first encounter with Christ.

I ran away at 16, was returned, then left permanently after high school. I traveled to San Diego and drifted into addiction, promiscuity, and homelessness. My life was aimless and dark.

Kenetta Fabing, continued

In 2018, walking alone in Daytona Beach, exhausted and broken, I cried out, “God, I can’t do this anymore! Please fix what’s wrong with me.” I surrendered fully and marked that day by writing on a stone, “On this day, I am here.” I still have that rock. God met me exactly where I was: rough, unpolished, and desperate. Today, I live in peace and joy, constantly in conversation with my Lord.

I’m no longer lost because I’m deeply rooted in Him.

Engaging the Culture Longing for Relationship

By I’Ching Thomas

A recent study from UCLA’s Center for Scholars & Storytellers revealed something surprising: today’s teens and young adults are weary of how much sex and romance dominate movies and TV. Nearly half say romantic plotlines are overused, and even more believe sexual content rarely adds anything meaningful. Instead, young people express a growing desire for stories centered on friendship, community, and healthy platonic relationships.

This shift is both encouraging and important. A departure from the hook-up culture we heard about not long ago, this change suggests that teens are desiring the very things Christian community is meant to offer—social belonging, connection, and friendships rooted in trust and acceptance.

This isn’t surprising as we consider the formative years of most of the teenagers and young adults today have been shaped by the prevalence of virtual/digital connection and the social isolation of the Covid era. Many long to connect with others in person but struggle with social anxiety because they’ve not really developed the necessary skills to do so.



Waterbrooke young adults Cale Baber, Hannah and Jonah Anderson nurture healthy friendship.

As the Church, we must seize this cultural moment by being intentional in fostering intergenerational relationships, small groups, and mentoring. When we model authentic relationships and Christ-centered love in our communities, we offer exactly what many young people say they’re longing for. As we disciple young people, we have an opportunity to affirm that Scripture places profound value on friendships: David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi, Jesus and His disciples. These relationships remind us that love extends far beyond romance and the physical (sexual). This way, we can help the next generation experience the fullness of God’s love through genuine community—showing them they truly belong and are loved and accepted for who they are.