



No Vacancy

Part 3 - "Making Room for Seasons"

Small Group Material

December 11th, 2016

Leader Guide

Bottom Line: *We must make room for connections and to see those we love.*

Study Verses: *1 Peter 1:13-16, 1 John 4:7-8, Matthew 5:23-24, Hebrews 10:23-25, 1 Peter 3:8*

Define The Win: *Participants would take a moment to pause and reflect not only on their current connections but begin to develop a vision for their relationships in 2017. They would recognize and acknowledge where they've let pride and selfishness win out over love and self-preservation prevent authenticity from flourishing.*

Key Points

- *The more you get to know someone, the messier things get.*
- *To love is to act for the good of another.*
- *People may not remember what you say, but they will never forget the way you made them feel.*
- *If we're not careful, relationships can very easily become destinations or resume builders.*
- *It's easier to stay shallow than wade into the mess.*
- *Speed kills relationships.*

ENCOUNTER

- Think about your relationships in 2016. Are your relationships flourishing or floundering? What has been the cause of either their growth or weakening?
- What damage can the pace of our life inflict on our relationships? When we are in a hurry, what happens to our connections?
- People may not remember what you say, but they will never forget the way you made them feel. If we were to ask your friends and family how you made them feel over the past year, what do you think their response would be and why? How would their response make you feel?

FORMATION

"Pride is defined by desire, not by love. It is, above all, the presumption that my desires should be fulfilled and that it is an injustice, a crying shame, and an injury if they are not... Love eliminates pride because its will for the good of the other nullifies our arrogant presumption that we should get our way." -Dallas Willard

- Read 1 Peter 1:13-16. What does it look like to pursue holiness in our relationships with one another? How would our interactions with one another change if we looked to future grace instead of former ignorance?
- Read 1 John 4:7-8 and the quote from Dallas Willard. How does love eliminate pride? Why does love require intentionality and focus? How is our willingness to show love tied to our understanding of Christ's love?
- Read Hebrews 10:23-25 and 1 Peter 3:8. The more you get to know someone, the messier things get. How have you seen this statement play out in your relationships? What causes you to engage in self-preservation or put limits on your connections with others?
- Read Matthew 5:23-24. According to this passage, what value did Jesus place on our relationships with one another?

EXPRESSION

- How do you want your current connections to grow and deepen in the upcoming year? What do you hope is different about your relationships a year from now?
- What values do you want to define your relationships in 2017? How will you ensure these values are lived out with the people around you? How can you make room in your life for connections?

- How would the way you approach your relationships in 2017 change if you lived by the “leave things better than you found them” principle?

LEADER INSIGHT: Speed kills relationships. When life is going by at warp speed everything becomes blurry, including our connections. Life picks up and our relationships lose out. Tending to our relationships drop to the bottom of our “to-do” list. We fail to make room for connections. In the midst of this frantic pace, many of us find ourselves isolated and alone. We might be physically present with others, but emotionally we are still absent.

Ensuring that our needs, wants, and desires get met serves as our ultimate priority. Anyone who gets in the way of furthering our agenda suddenly becomes an annoyance, an inconvenience, or even an enemy. Rather than seeing people, we see an obstacle. Individuals become a pawn we play to get our desired results. We wind up using people as tools for our own purposes.

This approach stands in stark contrast to the importance the Bible places on our human relationships. We are called to love. We are challenged to look for ways to give rather than receive. We are urged to think of others better than ourselves and put their needs above our own. We are to leave people better than we found them.

Since we are called to be image bearers, selflessness should define us at our core. We reflect His heart when we invest and encourage. Yet, often in life we forget that God wired us to be gift-givers. Instead, we get so wrapped up in our own little world that we lose sight of all that is taking place around us. The person who is hurting and in pain goes unnoticed. The needs of others never get met. The kind words never get spoken. We allow the opportunities God presents to us to make an impact and move into relationships with others to pass us by.

Truly seeing people is a skill and requires one to make room for others. Being present doesn't happen by accident. It involves intentionality, focus and vision. For this to happen, we must be vulnerable, transparent and most importantly, present. To love is to act for the good of another. One of the greatest acts of love is offering your time because time equals value. Everywhere Jesus turned there were people clamoring for his attention. In spite of all these demands, not only did Jesus carve out moments to practice solitude, He valued each person that crossed His path. Jesus saw people.