



by Pastor Scott Boerckel

We live in an isolating world.

Some attribute this to, of all things, the automatic garage door.¹ We too easily pass by one another rather than engage one another. We work in isolation; we drive home; we open the garage door; we retreat to our cave. As a result, we end up living very disconnected lives.



This unhealthy way of life actually compounds over time, though, because the more one is isolated, the more comfortable one becomes with isolation and the less comfortable one becomes with relational connection.

The Christian is called by our Lord to resist this isolating temptation. Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with the idea of doing life together. Psalm 133:1 says, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" While we tend to emphasize the idea of "unity," let's also not forget the idea of "together." In the Old Testament, life was intended to be lived in community, with one another. It was an essential part of the community of Israel to be divided into groups of hundreds, fifties, and even down to tens (Exodus 18:21-23). Similarly, the New Testament tells us that God's New Society, the church, is called to do life together, and each individual is called to join in community with other believers. All of the "one anothers" of the New Testament remind us just how important this is. Loving one another (11 times in the NT); forgiving one another (Ephesians 4:32); confessing sins to one another (James 5:16); serving one another (Galatians 5:13) are just a few of the 100 times that "one another" is described in the New Testament.

In fact, we can make this declaration of fact—there is no maturing in Christ apart from being in relationship with other believers. As we have seen in our study in 1 Peter,



a key way that we are able to have a positive view of God's purposes for our lives and of the times in which we live is by loving one another (1 Peter 1:22). If we doubt that we live in the best time ever to be alive, it is possible that our doubts arise because we are not experiencing life in the body of Christ like Jesus intended.

Now, here's the rub. Living life together does not happen by osmosis or by accident. We cannot just assume that this will happen. We need to take positive action and make sacrifices in our lives for this to become a reality. The busyness of life crowds us, and the temptation is strong to avoid making "commitments" that will bleed off time and energy. However, what we fail to realize if we take this course is that we are losing the very thing we need to help us be filled with joy. Note the sacrifices of the members of the early church for one another, AND then note the descriptions of joy that they had about their lives. It was not because the details of life were going so well for them; in fact, many times they were suffering. But in the midst of that suffering, they had God AND each other, and that community meant that even in the suffering they experienced great joy. Acts 2:45-46 says, "They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."

So, how are you doing in living life in community with other believers? I'd like to share a couple of assessments for you to check yourself on this. The first one is intended to measure your own sense of connectedness or isolation. The second one is intended to measure how well you are using the resources of your church in developing that connectedness. These are subjective and do not take the form of biblical authority. Just have some fun measuring your own connecting and engaging.

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love,

love one another earnestly from a pure heart...

1 Peter 1:22 (ESV)

Assessing your CONNECTNESS

Measure the following on a scale of 1-5. 5 = really, really great! 1 = none, or hardly at all

- I feel really connected to my brothers and sisters at The Oak.
- I have at least 3-5 friends at the Oak that I can tell anything, and they will love me the way that God wants them to love me, whether that means encouragement or exhortation.
- I have people at the Oak that I love so much that I feel joy every time I think of them.
- I have had someone at the Oak make a big sacrifice for me in the past 12 months.
- I have sacrificed in a significant way for a brother or sister at the Oak in the past 12 months.
- I have had to work through forgiving a brother or sister at the Oak for a way that they have sinned against me in the past 12 months.
- I have had to ask forgiveness of a brother or sister at the Oak for a way that I have sinned against them in the past 12 months.

The last two items might seem unusual to you, but these items actually measure the "real" closeness you have. The only people at the Oak are us sinners! So, if we get close to one another, we will sin against one another. If you have not sinned against or been sinned against, the chances are your fellowship is pretty shallow (or, we are way more perfect than I imagine we are!)

Now, count up your score.

CONNECTNESS SCALE

30-35 You are very connected to your brothers and sisters at the Oak.

24-29 You are well connected to your brothers and sisters at the Oak.

19-23 You are somewhat connected to your brothers and sisters at the Oak.

13-18 You are somewhat disconnected to your brothers and sisters at the Oak.

7-12 You are very disconnected to your brothers and sisters at the Oak.

Assessing your **ENGAGEMENT**

This next assessment will measure the extent of your engagement in the ministries that we have here at the Oak to draw us into relationship with one another. We have a process here designed to bring us to maturity in Christ. The idea is that these ministries will bring about the kind of relational connection that the New Testament commands so that we are filled with joy in our relationships with God and one another.

I attend our worship services (circle your answer):

- 5 points every Sunday with only rare exceptions
- 4 points 3 out of 4 Sundays
- 3 points out of 2 Sundays
- 2 points once a month
- 1 point we have a worship service every Sunday?

I attend an ABF on Sunday:

- 5 point every Sunday with only rare exceptions
 4 points 3 out of 4 Sundays
 4 points I would, but I am serving elsewhere in the church ministries on Sundays
- 3 points 1 out of 2 Sundays
- 2 points once a month
- 1 point What is an ABF?

I attend an East White Oak Small Group:

- 5 points every time that they meet with only rare exceptions4 points 3 out of 4 times that they meet
- 3 points 1 out of 2 times that they meet
- 2 points I show up when I can
- 1 point I am not a member of an East White Oak small group

The last time that I experienced a concrete loving action (however you define that) from a brother or sister at the Oak was (circle your answer):

- 5 points this week
- 4 points this month
- 3 points this year
- 2 points sometime in the past
- 1 point never

The last time that I had to forgive or seek forgiveness from someone at the Oak was (circle your answer):

- 5 points this week
- 4 points this month
- 3 points this year
- 2 points sometime in the past
- 1 point never



How do you view your participation in the body life ministries at the Oak of worship service, ABF, and small group (circle your answer)?

- 5 points Essential—I cannot live without any of them.
- 4 points Important—I need all of them, but sometimes I don't live like that.
- 3 points Helpful—If I can squeeze some of them into my life, I will do so.
- 2 points A good idea—I don't really know much about one or more of these, but if one or more of these things happen to happen, it would be good for me.
- 1 point I do not like one or more of these and do not plan to take part.

How do I view membership of the body at the Oak?

- 5 points I am a member and take this covenant very seriously. (If you are presently in the "Discovering Membership" class, circle a "5" as well.)
- 4 points I am a member, but I don't really think about my membership covenant very much.
- 3 points I am not a member, but I have given it serious thought.
- 2 points I am not a member and for a variety of reasons, I do not intend to seek membership.
- 1 point I do not want to be a member.

Now, count up your score on this one.

ENGAGEMENT SCALE

30-35 You are very engaged in the ministry opportunities that your church provides to connect you with others.

24-29 You are well connected, but there are some areas of growth for you to explore.

19-23 You are somewhat connected to our church ministry connection opportunities, but there are significant gaps in that participation.

13-18 You are not very well connected to the body life of the Oak.

7-12 You are disconnected from the opportunities that the Oak provides to place you in significant relationship with others.



So, what do I do with this information?

Well, it seems that there are four possibilities:

HIGH SCORE ON BOTH ASSESSMENTS

If you score high on both assessments, this means that you are both well connected with others and are fully utilizing the means that your church provides to enable that connection. This is exactly what your church leaders hope and pray for!

SCORE HIGH ON CONNECTION AND LOW ON ENGAGEMENT

If you score high on connection but low on engagement, it seems that you are developing godly relationships with others here at the Oak but are not employing the means designed by your church to achieve those connections. If this is the case, your church leaders would love to know how you are achieving that so that they can assess what other means can be fruitful for developing spiritual maturity. Would you email me (scott@ewo.org) and let me know how you are connecting so significantly outside of our paths to spiritual maturity?

SCORE LOW ON CONNECTION AND HIGH ON ENGAGEMENT

If you score low on your connection with brothers and sisters but high on your engagement in our paths to maturity, this means that the ways that we are crafting a plan for spiritual maturity is not working, at least not for you. Would you email me (scott@ewo.org) and let me know if this is happening in your life? It would be a shame for us to have this happening while all the time we think we are being successful.

SCORE LOW ON CONNECTION AND LOW ON ENGAGEMENT

If you score low in both assessments, may I encourage you? You do not have to stay in this spot! We long for you to grow! So, one place to begin is to explore how you can carve out time purposefully to engage in our paths to maturity—worship service, ABF, and small group. We sincerely believe that if you do that, you will grow both closer to God and closer to your church family. Please email me (scott@ewo.org) if you would like help in taking your next steps to greater connection and engagement with your brothers and sisters.

Let me conclude this article by saying just how outstanding I have seen the body care for one another lately. There have been several cases where people have shown sacrificial love, where Christ has been exalted to others by how we love one another. In just one instance, a person who is part of another church witnessed the love of our small group members for one another. This person was not part of a small group at their church, but, when they saw how our members cared for one another, it prompted them to explore joining a small group at their church. I am so glad that this is our testimony and my prayer is that we will continue to grow in such maturity.

With love for you all in Jesus Christ, Pastor Scott



¹See: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/preston-smith-/driving-relationships_b_4345772.html



BOOK REVIEWS FOR KIDS

BY JUDITH BIRKEY

THE BIGGEST STORY ABC

The Biggest Story ABC is loved by both the adults and preschooler in our family!

Each page (A-Z) has one sentence highlighting a word that starts with that letter. From "In the beginning, God created ADAM and Eve," to "One day we will live forever in ZION, the new world God is preparing for those who love him," the 26 sentences give your child (and you) an overview of God's story of redemption!

The illustrations are simple and colorful. Our 3 yr old's favorite illustrations are the nail prints in Jesus' hands for "Jesus WINS!," the empty tomb for "UP from the dead," and the crown of thorns for, "his own SON to come & save his people from their sins."



LEARNING TO GET ALONG SERIES



Do you ever wish you had some resources to reinforce what you're teaching your child about being polite & kind or about sharing?

Our church library has a great series of books to do just that! The 32-page picture books are mostly engaging illustrations, with one sentence on each page. Our 3 yr old wants to read them over and over again! The back of each book includes 4 pages of ways to reinforce the ideas in the book through questions and games. There are six books in the "Learning to Get Along" series in our library. While the books provide excellent modeling and reinforce the habits I long to see in my children, I need to take it a step further and connect it to their hearts, by explaining how Jesus is kind to us, and how He is our example for being kind, and how He also gives us the power to be kind. If these books can provide a stepping stone for that, and are books my son wants to hear over and over, that is great!

living • stone communities

CHURCH PLANT UPDATE

BY TOM POWFLL

As the Father sent Jesus, so He sends His Church. At Living Stone Communities, we continually remind ourselves of our biblical identity as family, missionaries, and servants.

Living geographically near one another provides abundant opportunity to live out those identities. As we connect in everyday life with each other and with not-yet-believing friends and neighbors, our love for one another serves as an apologetic for the gospel of Christ we proclaim. Here is a partial text that Larry Van Gundy received from a neighbor. It demonstrates the great need for us to "go" reach the people that won't come to us, and how a group of believers living in community stands out in the midst of an increasingly individualistic culture.

"...You have partially restored my faith in Christians, but the body of the church is still of grave concern and skepticism. Yes you are amazing yes you show the love of Christ in every moment of every day, but my skepticism still wonders is this just you and this small band of believers or is this the church that is made up of such amazing folks. You know I have been burned by allowing a church family in to then be pushed aside and out at my darkest moment. I am more open than ever, more trusting than ever, but I still hold my guard high"

October 1 was a milestone in that we held our 1st Sunday service! We worshipped in the parking lot outside The Hub with a couple of pop-up tents and words to songs written on post-it pads taped to the fence. Surprise, God came anyway! These services are the first and third Sundays through the end of this year, primarily for the core and committed people of our group. They will serve as a much needed ramp up time to get our feet wet and work out the logistics of a church service "on wheels" (not in a permanent location). We finalized plans regarding space at Irving School for Sundays. They blessed us



service at Living Stone Communities

beyond belief! They gladly offered their gym, cafeteria, some storage space, and parking. We will need this sooner than planned since The Hub is getting tight for space. As Grill Nights wind down for the season, we will continue winding up with other community-connecting events like pumpkin carving, Comlara campfire, and a Saturday morning, cross-cultural, Authentic Manhood group, and a Trunk-or- Treat community outreach.

The people of East White Oak continue to be a huge blessing with encouragement, resources, and continuation of programs serving the students and teachers at Irving School. We are looking forward to the EWO Missions Conference where, on the evening of November 11, Living Stone and The Oak will gather in the Irving gym for a time of sharing and prayer.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What does the prayer life of the church look like?

In short it is corporate prayer, leadership hospitality and prayer, Moms in Prayer for schools, and personal prayer. We meet for all-church corporate prayer once a month in a home. We then ask that gospel community leaders invite several other individuals or families into their home for a simple meal and time of prayer 2-3 times a month. This provides an opportunity to get to know one another on a deeper level and for leaders to disciple others by example and instruction in the essential Christian disciplines of hospitality and prayer. It helps reinforce the idea of prayer as a part of normal life in the home with family.

Eren Moore jumped right in this school year with Moms In Prayer groups for Irving School and Bloomington High. She tells this story:

"Our family moved over to South Livingston St. on August 5th. I have to admit, I was most nervous for my youngest, Griffin, to switch schools from Northpoint to Irving. But God is so good, He kept putting people around me to assure me how amazing the teachers at Irving are. I heard a lot about Mrs. Barlow--she was the best 3rd grade teacher around! So I prayed and trusted that God would put Griffin in the "perfect" class (i.e., Mrs. Barlow's).

"Class lists were finally released. No Mrs. Barlow. He got Mrs. Hubble. Hubble? I never heard of her. Pray. Trust. A few days later Larry had scheduled a prayer walk at Irving. As Larry does, he invited EVERYONE, including the staff at Irving. As we arrive, Larry is standing behind a woman I did not know pointing at her and mouthing, "This is Mrs. Hubble!" What? Griffin and I get to meet her even before school starts? What? She is the ONLY staff member that showed up to pray that night? What? I got to be in her group to pray over the kiddos? Another sweet example of God's tender care for our family as we stepped into the unknown with Him.

"One ministry that I had a desire to bring to Irving and Bloomington High School was a Moms In Prayer group. Moms In Prayer is a worldwide ministry devoted to covering every child and every school in prayer. Moms gather weekly to pray specifically for their children, the school, and staff. Some Moms In Prayer groups have a teacher that is willing to collect prayer requests from the staff. Neither school had a group yet. So I figured since Mrs. Hubble was a praying lady, I would ask her to be that teacher contact for us. She was thrilled at the idea that there would be weekly (at least!) prayers lifted up for Irving, and she was excited to get on board! So we began, and here is some of the feedback we've received from the teachers:

"Mrs. _____ asked me to please thank you for all the prayers...they have really helped!"

"A teacher wanted to pass along a note of thankfulness that a prayer has been answered."

"Thank you for being so amazing! The teachers are so appreciative of you!"

"One of the praying moms shared this in response to this unexpected and sweet feedback from the teachers: She said our desire is for the teachers to see God in His answers to their prayers. That through us meeting, they will get a glimpse of the One who loves and cares for them so that He will be glorified in all His splendor!"

"Each week we select a group of teachers or staff to pray for, and we write them a note of encouragement. We also want to show them love by leaving treats in the Teacher Workroom. It is such a privilege to pray for our school and see how it is building relationships and showing them the love of God."

"You don't have to be a mom to join us in prayer for Irving Elementary! We meet every Wednesday at 9:15am! Come join us if you can!"









FRANKLIN GRAHAM P.O. BOX 3000, BOONE, NC 28607

Dear Reverend Boerckel,



We continue to be heavily involved in hurricane relief after Harvey, Irma, and Maria. I visited our work in Texas and Florida, and have just returned from the Caribbean where the devastation is incredible and people are going to be without power for months. At multiple sites in Texas and Florida, our staff and volunteers are working to tarp roofs, clean out mud, rip out drywall, and remove waterlogged debris from homes so that repairs can begin. We have sent generators, blankets, heavy duty plastic, hygiene kits, water filtration systems, and much more to the Caribbean, and we have teams on the ground in several locations there as well. Our hearts go out to all those whose lives have been turned upside down by these historic storms. We would be grateful for your prayers for this work and for families who are left homeless and hurting.

As we reach out in Jesus' Name, it is a privilege to be able to share the message of the One who can carry us through life's storms. "You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in their distress, a shelter from the storm" (Isaiah 25:4a).

Again, thank you, and may God richly bless you.

Sincerely,

in Graham

OCTOBER Missions <u>Special Giving Report</u>

Each month East White Oak is blessed by members of our congregation who give money to missions above and beyond their gift to our church budget. The missions team prayerfully distributes this money as needs are made known. October gifts are listed here:

- 1. Up to \$15000 to cover costs for the Zimbabwe team
- 2. \$500 approved for each supported missionary as Christmas gifts

- 3. \$1000 approved for the Salem4Youth banquet table
- 4. \$5000 approved to support Missio Dei (Romanian church) and new staff member Soren Deac.
- 5. \$2000 plus an additional \$500 approved for Van Hoorns' trip to visit Josh and Amelia Jenkins and as an encouragement gift.
- \$3945.08 approved as a gift to Mavuno Village for a building project following the Tanzania trip
- 7. \$2500 approved to the Bagley's to assist thrift shop operation
- 8. \$2000 approved to Eric Jenkins to complete the funds needed for his first year at Salem4Youth



With special quest Ruth Gearhart

BRING A FRIEND

Enjoy sweet and savory treats, warm fellowship, and inspiring testimonies of God's faithfulness.

SPREAD THE LOVE

Please bring a donation of a woman's personal hygiene item for the Ministry and More Food Pantry.

This unique holiday event features Reserved Seating

RSVP BY DECEMBER 5

Look for the Women's Ministry table in the long hallway to RSVP and choose your table



MAKE RESERVATIONS BEGINNING NOVEMBER

ELDER / DEACON **NOTES**

Everyone likely noticed the major update to the Banquet Room, but the Deacons also have several other projects. A new nursing room was recently completed in Nursery 1 and work continues to mitigate corrosion in the Mechanical Room. There is also work underway to create private changing spaces for baptisms to ensure a positive experience for those who are baptized at The Oak. In the parking lot, new parking blocks were placed along the retaining wall as a safety measure. Also, a new trailer was recently purchased.

Please remember to pray for Living Stone Communities, our church plant in west Bloomington. Pastor Larry, the entire pastoral staff, and the elders are working to transition Larry's current duties as he ramps up his responsibilities with the Living Stone Communities. We will soon establish a search committee to seek a replacement for Pastor Larry when he moves full-time to his new ministry.

BIRTHS

Ezra Alexander (born September 8) Son of Jonathan and Kelli Goodyear

Amelia Jean (born August 30) Daughter of Don and Stacy Spaulding

DEATHS

Mona Moore (Christen Zook's mother) Passed away September 24

James Struthers

(Jessica Spaulding's brother) Passed away September 4



Meet Angela Witte

Children's Ministry Volunteer Toddler Church

"You have made sure that children and infants praise you. Their praise is a wall that stops the talk of your enemies." Psalm 8:2 NIRV

Toddler Church is often referred to as the toddler's first church experience. Toddlers are taught to sit in their chairs and for the very first time follow along with a structured group worship experience. They sing, sing, sing! They "pat their Bibles" while they read Bible words (fun stickers). They pray, and give their "monies" to God...all the things big people do in big people church.

Since 2000, Angela Witte, has been a faithful, loving leader of the toddlers!



Angela was raised in the Church of Christ, where she met her husband Joe. They have celebrated 22 years of marriage. God blessed them with six fantabulous kids, Jordan (18) Genesis (16) Jacob (14) Judah (11) Jasper (9) and Justus (5). They live in rural Waynesville with an ever-entertaining group of farm animals. Angela has been a stay at home, homeschooling mom for the past 18 years.

Angela came to know Jesus as her Savior as a teen. "I grew up in the church and became one of those kids who knew how to spit out all the "right" answers, sing all the songs, and play a part—but I had no heart connection with the Lord. At age 13, while attending a large youth conference, God flooded my soul and my eyes were opened to the fact that God is POWERFULLY REAL, He wanted a true place in my life, and from that moment on I belonged to Him. Due to my own conversion story, I have a heart and passion for "church kids" who grow up in the body of believers and yet can still miss who God truly is."

Why did Angela become involved in Children's Ministry to toddlers? "I LOVE that I'm simply allowed to be a part of God's work. Much of God's blessing for His children comes through serving and giving. He has proven this to me time after time through the years. I'm also a firm believer that if others are serving my children, then I need to take part in serving theirs as well. Our hearts are forever grateful to the people of EWO who have invested in our own children the past 18 years!"

Passion for toddlers and their experiences with God inspires Angela. "My favorite part of teaching the toddlers specifically, is experiencing worship through their eyes. Truly I could not give this up from my life. At Christmas time, while we rock a tiny baby doll Jesus in our arms and then place him gently in the manger of hay...I have no words for how special this is. True, simple, uncomplicated and pure worship. After a morning in Toddler Church, I enter the sanctuary with fresh awe for the God I will sing to in Big People church. My other all-time favorite part of teaching toddlers is hearing them call my name in the hallway at church. I am their teacher—what joy to my heart!"

Angela enjoys watching toddlers grow and change in BIG ways throughout the year. Fearful children become unafraid, shy children participate, and her favorite, non-smilers become smilers! This metamorphosis occurs every year without fail, she shares.

Teaching a roomful of toddlers isn't without its challenges! Sickness, crankiness, and prolonged crying can make a morning challenging. Prayer is necessary. Angela asks that we "pray specifically for the ministry to Toddlers. Many people do not realize we are planting seeds and teaching, we are not merely babysitting. They are fertile soil, perhaps the most fertile and receptive. Yet in general, adults seem to shy away from teaching toddlers. Pray for the Lord to raise up willing workers who see the significance of the toddler ministry. Pray for our energy and vision of the real reason we serve in CM, planting the seeds of God's love in the hearts of those who are so receptive."

Each person would be truly blessed if they were able to witness a Toddler Church class! The energy is high, the love deep, and the wonder is faith building! Please thank God for the ministry to toddlers at the Oak, and those who minister to them, including Angela Witte!

SENIOR SAINTS November Event : Thanksgiving Dinner

Thanksgiving Dinner... Now—this may be your first or maybe your second... Thanksgiving dinner is hard to beat! And by joining us you're in for a treat!

Tuesday, November 28 11:30 AM EWO Banquet Room



Meal by Jeff & Bonnie Melick Catering

Meal Cost (\$8)

Entertainment to follow by The Lilly Light Group inspiring us with Southern and

Country Gospel Music



RSVP by November 21

Call the church office (309-454-3833) or sign up on the Bulletin Response Card.





OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

The amazing journey of a shoebox begins with you and results in evangelism, discipleship, and multiplication! For more information visit ewo.org. Shoeboxes must be returned to The Oak by November 19.



CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA CONCERT





ADVENT DEVOTIONS

ADVENT is a wonderful time for us to take a break from our normal routine and reflect on the wonderful story of the first Christmas.

ADVENT DEVOTION BOOKS will be available for your family beginning Sunday, November 26.



MORNING SERVICES 9:00 & 10:30 AM "How Do We Tell Others About Jesus?" Nursery Available // infant-age 2 No Sunday School or ABFs.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES 4:00 & 5:30 PM "The Hope of Christmas" Family Services // No Nursery