

Forming Relationships

September 9, 2018

Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Labuhn

This morning we're beginning a 9-week series entitled, "Together with God's Vision". After more than a year of our congregation's staff and various congregational leaders getting together, through prayer and guidance, we've looked at what our congregation does best, reviewing the ministries and passions of our congregation, and seeing how God has uniquely called us to fulfill His Great Commission, we have been able to articulate the mission and values of our congregation. Mission and values which we believe God will bless and move us forward in the years to come, fulfilling what He wants for us at this time and place. After all, God has brought us together as part of His Vision here at Our Savior's Way in Ashburn Virginia to fulfill the Great Commission – glorifying Him and making disciples in His Name.

Over the course of the next 9 weeks, we'll be looking at these mission and values to understand how they fit with the Word of God and how we can best use them in our daily lives. Where you are in your faith walk is important to us this morning, and we would like everyone to take an anonymous survey to get a baseline on how well we are teaching this series. So, I want to encourage you to use the iPads that are available and the paper copies, if you prefer, or the "Together with God's Vision" webpage, to fill out this short and easy, anonymous survey.

Our Mission and values are important to us and you might have already seen the mission statement, since is now printed on your bulletin cover in its entirety. Here it is on the screens, let's take a moment to read it together, "At Our Savior's Way, we glorify God and make disciples for Jesus by: Forming Relationships, Experiencing Jesus Together, and Sharing God's Love." Over the next 3 weeks our focus, in our sermons

and in our combined 9:30 am Sunday Bible Study located downstairs, will focus on this mission statement.

Today, as part of our mission statement, we're looking at the first part of the mission statement, that is – "At Our Savior's Way, we glorify God and make disciples for Jesus by Forming Relationships". After all, while our Lord walked this earth, He formed many kinds of relationships. Some people rejected Him because they didn't approve of Him, like many of the Pharisees, Sadducees and other leaders at the time. Still others appreciated and were grateful because of the love, grace and mercy that quickly becomes the basis of their relationship with Jesus.

Taking a look at our Gospel reading for today, we see these kinds of relationships forming when Jesus says to Matthew, "Follow me." Matthew, a tax collector, was not liked by many people. Not only did tax collectors take money from the fellow citizens to give to the Romans, but they were also known to be corrupt. What we don't know from the text but is understood was that Jesus was going over to Matthew's house for dinner. Because in our text, some of the Pharisees say to Jesus' disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" After all, who would want to have any kind of relationship with any of those kinds of people? Any upstanding Pharisee at that time wouldn't want to associate with people who might tarnish their credibility in upholding the Mosaic Law for society or defile their social standing.

Even today in Northern Virginia, there seems to be a social standing. Who you socialize with and who your friends are, where you live and where you go out to eat, what kind of car you drive and what kind of clothes you wear, can all be a reflection of the kind of person you are and your social standing in society. But when Jesus walked this earth, He really didn't care about that. In fact, He knows that kind of relationships that we have with others. He knows the difficulties that our relationships experience. He knows the shame and guilt that we feel because of the sins we commit in our broken relationships and how we try to cover it all up to project the appearance of a perfect life.

Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." Jesus came to call all sinners to repentance and bring them into His Kingdom. He doesn't care about your social standing in this world, but He does care about what effects your heart the most - your relationship with Him and

with others. Mercifully, through His life, death, and resurrection, He willingly became the ultimate sacrifice on the cross so that we might receive something that we could have never achieved on our own - that of a fully restored relationship with God. Having fulfilled the law perfectly for us, the stain of our sin is covered by His blood that He shed for us so that we might have new life in Him. No longer sinners, but saints – holy ones of God, who willingly become His Hands and Feet so that His will might be done in our lives and in the lives of others.

At the end of Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus shares with his disciples His Great Commission – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Having been made right with Jesus, one of the ways that we begin to make disciples here at Our Savior’s Way is to build or rather form relationships.

All relationships have something in common or have a shared interest, and yet all of our relationships have their very beginning with God, our relationship with Him has an impact on us and those we meet every day. Here are some basic rules of human relationships. Let’s say them together....

1. Speak to people. There is nothing as nice as a cheerful word or greeting.
2. Smile at people. It takes seventy-two muscles to frown, only fourteen to smile.
3. Call people by name. Music to anyone's ears is the sound of his/her own name.
4. Be friendly and helpful.
5. Be cordial. Speak and act as if everything you do is genuinely a pleasure, and if it isn't, learn to make it so.
6. Be genuinely interested in people. You can like everybody if you try.
7. Be generous with praise, cautious with criticism.

8. Be considerate with the feelings of others. There are usually three sides to a controversy: yours, the other fellow's, and the right one.

9. Be alert to serve. What counts is what we do for others.

10. Add to this a sense of humor, a big dose of patience, and a dash of humility, and you will be rewarded in your relationships.

When people visit Our Savior's Way, some will attend because one of our members encouraged them to visit us on a Sunday morning. They will often comment that this is a friendly church. From our greeters who greet people when they come into the lobby, to the welcome center where they receive a gift and information about our ministries, to the follow up phone calls using the information they provide us through the pew pads, we form relationships with them so that we have an opportunity to invite them to experience Jesus even more through our small groups, service opportunities, worship experiences, and even our next generation ministries. So that, no matter what social standing they may or may not have, no matter who they are or where they've come from, together at Our Savior's Way, we might glorify God and make disciples for Jesus by forming relationships, experience Jesus together, and share God's love. In Jesus' Name. Amen.