

On-Track; God-given Relationships

Today we are in the 3rd part of our series “**On-Track.**” Here’s what we are talking about, I have found, when people tell their story about their faith journey, 5 things keep popping up over and over again. Also, these same five things are found at the core of the ministry of the St. James Church; all of our ministry is built around **these 5 things.**

They are: Life-appliable Biblical Teaching, God-given Friendships – which is today, Personal-practices - God has a Plan - Life-changing Experiences
These 5 things or catalysts that God uses over and over again to grow people’s confidence or faith up big.

The reason confidence in God is important, is because it is crucial to strong, healthy relationships

And

As our confidence in God grows, our relationship or intimacy with God grows

As our confidence in God grows, God becomes more real in our lives

That is why God wants you to have big confidence in Him

But when we ask how God does that, these 5 things or 5 catalysts are what I have seen in, or have heard described by, people who have had their confidence in the Lord grow big! **Remember**, this is not a list you go out and do, you won’t even find this list in the Bible anywhere.

Today we are talking about God-given relationships.

So to get you started; **Write down the name of someone you believe God used to make your faith/confidence in Jesus stronger or (If you’re not there yet) caused you to have interest in Jesus?**

When I look back on my relationships with these people, I can easily connect with them the concept – GOD-GIVEN! God allowed these people to intersect my life at a crucial time. Now I had a part, I could have said:

- No, I don’t have the time to participate in a Small Group
- No, I don’t have time to sit and talk with you – I have to get to work.
- No, I don’t need your counsel or your advice, I can figure this out on my own!

I had a part, God didn't force himself into my life, but I had a choice to say – YES – to participate and lean into these relationships, even though they were uncomfortable and awkward from time to time. Awkward and uncomfortable because these people challenged my worldview.

These were God-given relationships because they shaped... my faith, my view of God, my understanding of Christianity, and they helped me understand how the truth of God intersects and integrates real life! **Here is a truth you have seen as you thought about God-given relationship!**

God uses human relationships to grow our confidence in Him

You may be an exception, but I have never heard of anyone, on his or her own, talk about how God grew big confidence in God in their life... or grew into the person that God wanted me to be... and not have it connected to anyone in their life.

The people I have met who thought that, didn't know their story very well

Generally, when people talk about their spiritual story, they talk about a person who impacted their life by what they said, or did, or how they lived their life. They helped your confidence in God grow or drew you to have more interest in Jesus!

On the other hand, the opposite is true too!

Like all biblical principles, it works both ways!

Here's a question that is important, but a little awkward...

Looking back at your life, "Has there been anyone in your life who has undermined your faith in God or caused you to have less interest in Jesus? And as a result of that relationship, you drifted away from God? You found yourself to be further from God and far from where you wanted to be in your relationship with the Lord?"

Has anyone in your life undermined your confidence in God? Looking back at a phone call or message you wish you never responded to, an invitation or date you wish you never said yes to, or a business opportunity you wish you walked out on?

Think - our greatest regrets are directed to relationships! Again, there may be exceptions, but I never heard of someone talking about how their greatest regret

came in isolation, “I got into trouble all by myself!” It’s possible, but kinda hard to do. Think of that bad habit – it was more than likely introduced to you through another person. Why? Because relationships are powerful things.

Relationships intersect with our faith for good or bad! That’s why we can be fully confident that God will use relationships in our lives to build our confidence in God.

So – what do we do with that?

I doubt many would argue about this principle, “*That everybody you come in contact with will either build your faith in God or tear down your faith in God.*”

This is why this is important to talk about! If you and I learn to leverage our relationships... as they relate to our relationship with God; our confidence in God will grow into an out of the box, big confidence in God!

You may never have heard this concept before! You may have thought that faith was a Sunday Morning thing, something related to bible reading or a prayer life, but you never thought about it in relations. If not, you are likely missing out on one of the things or catalysts to build big confidence in God. **So...**

How can I use current relationships to grow my confidence in God?

1. We live in a world filled with people who don’t care about our faith or our personal wellbeing. We live in a world where it’s system draws us away from God or confidence in Him. This world feeds doubt and disbelief in the Lord.
2. In fact, our own nature is wired to draw us away from depending upon God. I know very few people who are tempted to do the right thing. My temptations never lead me to, “I couldn’t help but do the right thing!” My nature and the world around me don’t draw me deeper into greater confidence in God!

So... if there is a leverage point – relationally – that will build and establish greater confidence in God – I don’t want to miss it! **Imagine if we would work with our Heavenly Father in those God-given Relationships!**

Because every relationship you are in; you have a choice, to participate in those relationships when God brings them into your life, or not.

You likely remember that person who kept trying to invite you out to lunch or to go to that group or that church. God was trying to get your attention through those people. But you decided to walk away! I encourage you, stop it!!!!

What can you do to nurture God-given relationships?

These scriptures confirm what our experiences already tell us, that God uses relationships to grow our confidence in Him:

“Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.”

Proverbs 13:20

You don't have to be a Bible Scholar to recognize the truth in this scripture and understand the nature of relationships.

- You can walk with the wise to be wise.
- Or remember how your greatest regret usually comes from hanging out with fools who led you to foolish choices... and you suffered.

Proverbs was written by the wisest man Solomon, who said this about relationships:

- **The people you choose to spend time with, shape your spirituality.** *People impact your spirituality, if you choose to do life and surround yourself with the right people, God uses those relationships to create something good in you. In this case, wisdom! Look at the next point in your notes*

- **There is a spiritual component to relationships**

For some of you, this is nothing new, for others this is a whole new concept! There is a spiritual component to relationships, because God uses people to build big confidence in God and grow faith! The next scripture is:

“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’”

1 Corinthians 15:33

The point that Paul is making is that human relationships can have a negative spiritual impact. Even if you are not a religious person to recognize this truth! But God who cares about you and the quality of your life, who cares about the consequences of your choices.

- **Relationships can spiritually effect you in negative ways**

AND

- **There is a spiritual nature to relationships**

This is why one of the core principles of the St. James Church is to provide opportunities and an environment where people can build good, Godly, healthy relationships through Bible Studies, Sunday School classes and social activities like the Woman's Ministry or Senior Ministry in Waterford.

We can't build a God-given relationship for you, but we can provide and create the environment where you can experience a God-given relationship. God is willing to give you one of those relationships, but you have a part in that plan. You have a choice in the relationships in your life!

We can choose to place ourselves in the environment where these relationships happen; and don't just go once, stay in that environment. If you are only checking out the Christian Faith, please get yourself into one of the groups I talk about. Don't just come to church and hear sermons, you need more – a relationship!

This spiritual principle of relationships works 2 ways:

1. God wants to use relationships to grow your confidence in Him

This is important for us – and it's important to get your kids involved in the Kid's Christian Ed program, you need other adults speaking God's truths into their lives. I guarantee, when the time comes and you wish your kids were in this environment!

It will be to late!

The best thing you can do for your kids or grandkids or nieces and nephews is to get them into these environments where God can place these relationships in their lives – NOW! This isn't about a program, it's about the potential relationship God wants to place in their life so they can experience big confidence in Him!

There is a flip-side to all this! God may be trying to get you into a relationship where your confidence in God can grow big... it may not be about you getting into a relationship, because you are in one already. The question is this:

Are you willing to be available so God can use you to be that person in someone else's life?

Some of you are praying for someone who needs God in some way, not that you think your better than them, but you see they need the peace, the grace or mercy, the hope that God offers and their situation is breaking your heart. You pray for them! But you've never reached out to be the God-given relationship they need! You don't for the same reason most of us don't – we don't think it's any of our business!

God-given relationships often start around awkward situations or conversations

God-given relationships often start with awkward conversations! They start with the words... I know this isn't any of my business, I know you didn't ask for my opinion about this... I know, I know, I know... But I can't just sit back anymore! At the risk of what little relationship we have, I'm reaching out.

You need to pray, "God, I'm taking a risk and making myself available for you to use! Even if it creates an awkward situation! Why – because God uses human relationships to grow big confidence in Him.

There's the challenge... to get out there and take some risks, place yourself in some environments where God can use you in awkward situations or conversations. Start talking to the people around you and start sharing the hope and grace of Jesus Christ! Maybe introduce an awkward topic, start a "I know this is none of my business" conversation with that person who is in a difficult situation and your heart has been breaking for them and you have been praying for them! Send that letter or give that card to give encouragement or prayer.

Here is my point – this is a principle that works all the time... and we either work with it, or we ignore it. Your friends determine the direction and quality and depth of your life, your faith and your confidence in God. And God uses people to impact your life and your confidence in Him!

So will you leverage it by placing yourself in environments where God can use people to grow your confidence in Him... or do you need to leverage yourself to be more available as a person who is willing to intercept someone who needs to hear what you say and how Jesus wants to help them in the situation they are struggling with!

Prayer: