

1. Get Acquainted: Icebreaker

Transactional Relationship: an association based on someone possessing something, not because of who they are but what they have.

Give an example of someone you spent time with to get access to what they had but not because of who they were:

- Tim's example of the joke by Jim Gaffigan, the neighbor kid who had a pool.
- TimO and many of my coaches. I would behave around them and act interested so they might like me and so I could get playing time. Ugh! A very great regret.

2. Worship: Great is our Father and Generous in All His Ways

God is generous and we are prone to take many of his amazing gifts for granted. This poem by Robert Service is a beautiful reminder of the wonder of the world God has made and concludes with a sweet invitation to what that means about the One Who Made It All. Spend time praising God.

The Wonderer

I wish that I could understand
The moving marvel of my Hand;
I watch my fingers turn and twist,
The supple bending of my wrist,
The dainty touch of finger-tip,
The steel intensity of grip;
A tool of exquisite design,
With pride I think: "It's mine! It's mine!"

Then there's the wonder of my Eyes,
Where hills and houses, seas and skies,
In waves of light converge and pass,
And print themselves as on a glass.
Line, form and color live in me;
I am the Beauty that I see;
Ah! I could write a book of size
About the wonder of my Eyes.

What of the wonder of my Heart,
That plays so faithfully its part?
I hear it running sound and sweet;
It does not seem to miss a beat;
Between the cradle and the grave
It never falters, stanch and brave.
Alas! I wish I had the art
To tell the wonder of my Heart.

Then oh! but how can I explain
The wondrous wonder of my Brain?
That marvelous machine that brings

All consciousness of wonderings;
That lets me from myself leap out
And watch my body walk about;
It's hopeless -- all my words are vain
To tell the wonder of my Brain.

But do not think, O patient friend,
Who reads these stanzas to the end,
That I myself would glorify. . . .
You're just as wonderful as I,
And all Creation in our view
Is quite as marvelous as you.

Come, let us on the sea-shore stand
And wonder at a grain of sand;
And then into the meadow pass
And marvel at a blade of grass;
Or cast our vision high and far
And thrill with wonder at a star;
A host of stars -- night's holy tent
Huge-glittering with wonderment.

**If wonder is in great and small,
Then what of Him who made it all?
In eyes and brain and heart and limb
Let's see the wondrous work of Him.
In house and hill and sward and sea
In bird and beast and flower and tree,
In everything from sun to sod,
The wonder and the awe of God.**

Kingdom Centered Prayer: “Pray-paring” for the Holidays

Pray-paring for the Holidays means we do just that, we pray for every event, every happening, and every person we are going to see, may see and the ones we hope not to see.

Think of the relationships in our parable:

- Younger son asks for his inheritance – “Dad, you are dead to me.”
- Younger son squanders family fortune in reckless living – “seeing prostitutes”
- Older son despises both his younger brother and Dad and seems more than willing to share the dirty laundry on both of them.
- Father seems to play favorites.
- A big party and not everyone is excited about it.

- ⇒ Have each person make a list of the events of the holiday season on the calendar.
- ⇒ Pray for the folks putting on the party and those attending.
- ⇒ Ask God to give you a heart of compassion for each person you are blessed to get to spend time with.
- ⇒ Confess any weirdness in relationships so that you are ready with a quick apology and a kind word for each person you have the opportunity to enjoy or even bump into.
- ⇒ Praise God for family and friends this Holiday season the ones you see and the ones you can't.

3. Sermon Reflection: The Father Goes Out

1. The Goodness of the Father in the offence of his Sons
 - How is the Father Generous?
 - How is the Father kind?
 - How is the Father humble?
 - How is the Father merciful?
 - How is the Father thick-skinned?
 - How is God doing these things for you now?
2. How is the Father offended?
 - Offended by the younger son in his leaving? ... in his return?
 - Offended by the older son's work ethic? relationship with his younger brother?
 - Offended by the older son's description of the events?
 - How are you offending God?
3. How does the Father go out toward his sons?
 - The younger son
 - The older son
 - How is the Father going after you?

4. Mission: On Mission for the Holidays – Be Creative and Go on a “Love Offensive” This Holiday Season

- For every gift exchange party you attend– Buy or spend that same amount of money on a gift or give a gift to a mission or homeless shelter
- Share your 3 minute testimony with at least 3 people this holiday season
- Meet 2 new people at every party/event and report in to your family each time
- Go on a “love offensive” and purposely compliment someone you have not been getting along with lately or ever.
- Drop in on an old friend and tell them a story of what they mean to you.