

# ENGAGE

I practice  
being present  
with others



Developing rhythms  
in my relationship  
with the church

## Engage *I practice being present with others*

We often seem to have better relationships with our phones than we do with real people. How often do we see someone in a restaurant, or public place, surrounded by their own friends or family, and they are on their phones? Being present has become more difficult, so when we choose to do so it makes a huge impact. To engage is to be present and attentive to others, to take genuine interest, and to practice empathy. It is a rhythm that must be regularly practiced in order to grow. The great news is that it's becoming such a lost art, that even small efforts can produce amazing growth in our relationships with others.

### PRACTICES

**QUESTIONS** : Learn to ask open ended questions of the people in your life. Limit “yes” or “no” answers and take real interest in others. After you ask the question, actually listen to the answers, ask follow-up questions, and go deeper. The goal is to go beyond the surface with others allowing them to feel seen and heard.

**BE PRESENT**: Eliminate common distractions and “safety blankets” from your relational times. This includes things such as phones, watches, and tablets that can send a message suggesting you aren’t available. Notice what is happening around you. Pay attention to tone of voice, body language, and facial expressions of the people you are talking with. Seek to understand them beyond the surface.

**I SEE YOU**: Write down the names of 10-15 people in your life. Next to their names write 3 words about them. Review the words. Are they shallow (physical appearance type-words) or do they reflect a deeper understanding? Find the people you clearly don't know as well and make it a point to engage more fully with them. Find things about them to compliment. Empathize with their struggles and fears, and continue building into the relationships around you until you feel you truly see them for who they are.

### DIG IN

Read Mark 5:21-43

In what ways do you notice Jesus being “present” for the various people in this story? What does He do? How does He talk with them?

While there is much to distract Him, He still seems to find ways to focus His attention on the other person. What can we learn from this for our interactions with people?

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

What does it mean to “consider” another person?

Why is it important that we consider them when trying to figure out what will stir them up? How can we better know what will help them grow?

How does neglecting to meet with other Christians impact their growth and ours? How are we both affected?

## RESPOND .....

Of the three practices (Questions, Be Present, I See You), which feels most natural to you? Which stands out as an area for growth? If a practice is natural for you, take it to the next level. If a practice is an area where you would like to grow, make a plan to read more about it, and seek out others who do it well or have incorporated it into their lives. Then, actively and intentionally try out that practice for a month. Write down how you have seen God working in you, and others, as a result of anticipating God's movement through the practice.

Summarize what you've learned about engaging with others from this study:

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Community with others is not something we often “find,” it’s something we create. By choosing to be present with others, taking sincere interest in them and linking up with them, community will be fostered. You’ll find many verses describing how Christians are meant to relate to “one another.” Here is a list of verses to get you started, but feel free to look up more (there are over 100 of them!): Colossians 3:13; Philippians 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 5:11; 1 Peter 1:22; 4:9; 5:5; Galatians 5:13; 6:2; Ephesians 4:15; 4:32; Romans 12:10; 13:8; 14:13; James 5:16. Practice some of the “one anothers” with people around you and create stronger community.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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**Knowing God** by J. I. Packer

**The Good and Beautiful Community: Following the Spirit, Extending Grace, Demonstrating Love** by James Bryan Smith

**Crucial Conversations Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High** by Kerry Patterson

**Befriend: Create Belonging in an Age of Judgment, Isolation, and Fear** by Scott Sauls

**Everybody’s Normal ‘Til You Get to Know Them** by John Ortberg

## FOR KIDS

**God’s Big, Big Church** by Pamela Kennedy

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