

Beyond the Bat Cave

What little boy didn't love Superman or Batman growing up? I'd often pretend I could fly, shoot laser beams from my eyes, or that I had a fully stocked utility belt with all the coolest gadgets. But what good would all those abilities do if the heroes never left their secret hideouts? Imagine if Clark Kent chilled out all day in the Fortress of Solitude, or Bruce Wayne played video games in the Bat Cave 24x7! A hero's job — like most meaningful work — is about people!

As we grow up in discipleship, we learn the truth, let it rewrite our hearts, and take action for Jesus. But what else do we need as we train to be the Lord's disciple? We need to leave our fortress and venture out to serve those in our community. So, let's talk about how our relationship with Christ shapes all our other relationships!

What You Need to Know

Jesus' disciples follow his lead by building up believers and reaching out to those who don't yet know the Lord. *"As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith"* (Gal. 6:10).

Our first concern is the community of believers. Paul spends a giant chunk of his letters on the attitudes and behaviors needed for a healthy family in Christ. We strive for *"humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Eph. 4:2-3). It's easy to get hung up on what others "have done for me lately." But God's family flourishes when each of us begins with a Christlike commitment to contribute to others.

The Lord is also concerned with how we relate to those outside the church. We represent *him* in our interactions and seek to bring people into contact with the Lord himself (2 Cor. 5:20; 1 Peter 2:9).

What You Need to Do

Let's accept that whether we're connecting with those in the church or outside it, dealing with people is "messy" business. We all have our burdens, but Christ calls us to help bear each other's load (Gal. 6:2). Past and habitual sins, money problems, emotional brokenness, and marital issues — real difficulties are rarely solved by a quick and easy donation made from a distance. Are we ready to listen and invest in people? Christ's disciples can't passively keep to themselves, hoping folks will leave us alone. As Jesus *"went about doing good"* (Acts 10:38), we must seek to love people and do as much good for others as we can (Luke 6:27-36). Jesus' story of the good Samaritan teaches us to get involved when someone needs us, rather than keeping our distance as we go about our "holy" business (Luke 10:25-37).

Commit to hospitality (Heb. 13:2; Rom. 12:13), welcoming friends and strangers with grace and generosity. That often means opening our homes, but these days there are lots of other ways to invite others to connect and build friendships.

Relationships are two-way streets, but *"so far as it depends on"* us, we seek peace (Rom. 12:18). Perhaps neighbors will notice our distinctive lives of hope and character (1 Peter 2:9-12) and ask about the hope within us (1 Peter 3:15).

Through the Week

- **Read** (Mon) — Matt. 9:9-13, 35-38; Luke 10:30-37; Eph. 4:25-32; Rom. 15:2-7; 1 Peter 3:8-16

- **Reflect** (Tue) — Ask yourself, "*What can I do to build more meaningful relationships?*"
- **Request** (Wed) — Pray, "*Lord, show me where I can serve and support others today.*"
- **Respond** (Thu) — Give an encouraging text, card, or call to someone you think might need it today.
- **Reach Out** (Fri) — Ask someone, "*What approaches have you found most effective in teaching an unbeliever about Jesus?*"