

arc RESOURCES

HOW-TO SERIES



WALKING WITH LIONS

HOW TO FIND
*TRUE COURAGE &
ENDURING STRENGTH*
THROUGH
*GOD-HONORING
RELATIONSHIPS*

JONATHAN WIGGINS

FOREWORD BY JOHN MAXWELL

WHAT LEADERS ARE SAYING

about

WALKING WITH LIONS

What if there was more to church life than superficial, see-you-next-Sunday relationships? What if the greatest part of being on a church staff wasn't the important work you got to do, but the radical life-change you experienced as you did it? There is more, and we know it. Yet it often seems elusive, doesn't it? In *Walking With Lions*, Jonathan Wiggins lays out a simple, powerful pathway to richer relationships that I believe will equip you to experience the "more" you're yearning for.

PAUL ANDREW

Lead Pastor of Liberty Church

New York City, New York

For decades, people have heard me say, “Find a need and fill it; find a hurt and heal it.” That’s our calling in our relationship with unbelievers when we tell them the Good News about Jesus, it’s our calling when we serve the poor, and it’s our calling in our relationships with one another. In many ways, I think we do better with unbelievers and the poor than we do with those we call brothers and sisters! In *Walking with Lions*, Jonathan Wiggins gives us powerful principles and clear applications so we can genuinely love one another, forgive one another, and accept one another. We’d better not miss this calling! It’s a wonderful way to fill needs and heal hurts.

TOMMY BARNETT

Global Pastor of Dream City Church and author of *What If?*
Phoenix, Arizona

Few things in life can have the kind of impact that friendships do. In his book, *Walking with Lions*, my friend Jonathan provides a proven strategy to build a team that you’ll not only want around you, but will stick around you.

JOHN BEVERE

Co-founder of Messenger International and Best-Selling Author and Minister
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Many churches do a good job communicating the Word of God but lose sight of the importance of creating healthy and authentic relationships with the family of God. Our spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being depends on our relational health. Jonathan Wiggins has shown us how to deepen and strengthen our “iron sharpening iron” connections with people on our teams and in groups. This is a book worth reading, but even more, it’s a book that needs to be the practical guidebook for our most important relationships.

HERBERT COOPER

Senior Pastor of People’s Church and author of *But God Changes Everything*
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

In a day and age where followers are more coveted than friends, Jonathan challenges us to fight for covenantal relationships which were always intended to be a hallmark of the Christian faith. In this book, there is a sense of authenticity and experience because Jonathan actually lives out these principles among his staff and community. This is the type of friend he is to me and so many others. The reward of committing to walk with lions is well worth the risk!

BRANDON CORMIER

Lead Pastor of Zeal Church
Colorado Springs, Colorado

In a society that desperately struggles with how to connect in a healthy and meaningful way, Jonathan Wiggins' new book, *Walking With Lions* is the roadmap to bring life and balance into your relationships. Jonathan is one of the most authentic and generous leaders on the planet. His love and passion for all people is the model that every leader should look to attain. I encourage every pastor and leader to digest this book and apply it to your life.

LEE DOMINGUE

Legacy Pastor at Church of the Highlands, founder of Kingdom Builders USA and author of *Pearls of the King* and *Family Meeting Guide*
Birmingham, Alabama

Jonathan's book is a game changer. Just like the author, it's filled with authentic passion, incredible power and a deep sense of purpose. He masterfully explains the genuine importance of creating and sustaining life-giving relationships in life and leadership. He uncovers the reality of the human condition and its deep need for connection in authentic relationships. I'm better because of this book, and I believe you will be too.

JEREMY FOSTER

Pastor of Hope City Church
Houston, Texas

In *Walking with Lions*, Jonathan elevates an accessible theology of friendship that is both practical and primal, which is so useful as we navigate a culture that has domesticated real relationships. We now settle for relationships that are evident only in the likes and follows we acquire on social media. What we often don't know is that we find the most meaning through those closely assembled around us who are on the same spiritual trajectory—people that are near us and really know us. This book is a recipe for how to create meaningful relationships, and by the time you complete it, you'll have a culture of friendship baked in your DNA.

WAYNE FRANCIS

Lead Pastor of The Life Church

White Plains, New York

Some of life's most difficult challenges can be navigating relationships with other people. In *Walking with Lions*, Jonathan serves as a guide to help you achieve deeper and more meaningful relationships through vulnerability and genuine openness. As you read it, you will find that not only are you inspired personally to carry out the kinds of relationships he describes, but it will overflow to the people you lead. If you care about the kinds of relationships you and those you lead are fostering, you'll grab a copy of this book and read it together.

ROBBY GALLATY

Pastor of Long Hollow Baptist Church

Author of *Growing Up* and *Replicate*

Hendersonville, Tennessee

Jonathan is a one-of-a-kind overcomer who's figured out an ingenious way to choose health while walking through the minefield of Christian leadership. Sadly, many of us don't experience the grace and truth of genuine "one another" relationships. Quite simply, there are a thousand books on WHY

we should live authentically, but rare is the book that explains HOW, with profound research and tear-jerking story-telling. It's one of the few books I want my entire leadership team to read. Well done, Jonathan Wiggins!

PETER HAAS

Lead Pastor of SubstanceChurch.com

DJ & Music Producer for SubstanceVariant.com

Minneapolis, Minnesota

In *Walking with Lions*, Jonathan Wiggins blazes a trail for anyone who longs for deeper connections with others while bearing the pain of past disappointments. Grounded by grace and illuminated by God's Word, this book encourages your heart and nourishes your soul like sitting around a campfire with an old friend. You will return to its wisdom again and again.

CHRIS HODGES

Senior Pastor of Church of the Highlands

Author of *The Daniel Dilemma* and *Out of the Cave*

Birmingham, Alabama

I am so grateful that Jonathan Wiggins has shared his pursuit of building stronger relational bonds. There is nothing more important than relationships. Jonathan lovingly provides both principles and practical applications based on his experience and his commitment to live out relationships with his team and others.

PHIL KLEIN

Founder of Focus412

Birmingham, Alabama

Jonathan Wiggins has written one of the most insightful and compelling leadership books of the decade. *Walking with Lions* shows us how we can find courage and strength through relationships. In this book, Jonathan

shows us step by step how to delve deeper and foster genuine and enduring relationships with other leaders, propelling us and our leadership teams to higher levels. If you are intentional about becoming the leader God created you to be, then you need this book!

DR. DAVE MARTIN

Success Coach and Pastor

Author of *12 Traits of the Greats*

Detroit, Michigan

As the years go by, each of us realizes how rare and valuable true friendships are, especially true friendships that span the distance of say, 6,838 miles, roughly the distance between Loveland, Colorado and Jerusalem, Israel. Regardless of the physical distance between the worlds of Jonathan Wiggins and myself, I am honored to call him a true friend. The only way this could be possible is by Jonathan “practicing what he preaches” by implementing the principles in this book, among others: transparency, honesty and connectivity. Thank you, Jonathan for continually proving to me, and to many others, that leadership doesn’t have to be lonely.

CALEV MYERS

Founder and Chairman of ARISE

Jerusalem

In *Walking With Lions*, Jonathan has given us the necessary tools and equipment to build healthy God honoring relationships. This is not just a book based upon knowledge gleaned from books and research; He has written a book from the place of a true practitioner of healthy relationships.

JASON PARRISH

Lead Pastor of The Well Church

Salt Lake City, Utah

In our world of incredible speed and busyness, it's easy to get caught in the whirlwind of doing and miss out on loving. In his book, Jonathan Wiggins shares how God has led him, his team, and his church to reevaluate how they relate to each other and make the necessary adjustments. In case anyone thinks the kind of powerful, rich relationships he outlines are, well, unnecessary, they need to read the New Testament more carefully. *Walking with Lions* is a template for us to trust God to create life-changing, God-honoring, community-surprising love for each other. To make that happen, we'll need to do some soul-searching, and we'll need to make some adjustments in our priorities. But this, I'm certain, is exactly what God wants us to do.

WENDY PEREZ

Co-Lead Pastor of ChurchLV

Las Vegas, Nevada

All of us have taught and preached about the importance of relationships, and in *Walking with Lions*, Jonathan Wiggins has cracked the code. With the humility born from painful personal experiences and insights gained from years of God's healing touch, he offers hope that church leaders can nurture environments where people connect on a life-changing level. Use this book with your spouse, your best friends, your staff team, and groups in your church . . . and watch God do amazing things!

DINO RIZZO

Executive Director of ARC

Associate Pastor at Church of the Highlands

Author of *Servolution* and *Serve Your City*

Birmingham, Alabama

Everywhere we look, we're surrounded by books offering advice, processes, and plans that promise growth and results. But Pastor Jonathan Wiggins has done something that few do in this day and age of church planting and ministry: he has written a book with a message that stands out among the crowd. *Walking With Lions* takes an important look at leadership and team building from a perspective that is often overlooked—the power of honesty and vulnerability. The truths Jonathan shares have the potential to bring healthy, significant change from the inside out—for you and for those you lead. Furthermore, I believe it can create a ripple effect that can position your team and church for the same authentic connections we in the early church in Acts. When it's present in our teams and churches, we'll see the impact of our churches rise to an even greater level in our communities and beyond.

JOHN SIEBELING

Pastor, The Life Church

Memphis, Tennessee

From the first time I met Jonathan Wiggins a few years back, I have been so impressed with his burning heart for biblical revelation and his service to the body of Christ. I found, not only through our conversations, but also by observing Rez.Church, that Jonathan has divine grace and practical wisdom to deal with leadership issues. This led me to invite him to minister at events aimed towards leaders in Brazil. During the whole time he was with us, we were very enriched. I respect him deeply. I am sure that the divine deposit in his life will overflow through this book and bless your life.

LUCIANO SUBIRA

Founder of Comunidade Alcance

Author of *When Nothing Else Matters* and *The Impact of Holiness*

Curitiba, Brazil

I've watched Jonathan Wiggins walk out the principles from this book. I've seen his own life transformed and witnessed the same in those he has shared them with. I can't wait until a new generation of leaders gets access to the life-giving content that he unfolds. Do yourself a favor and dig in. Your relationships will never be the same.

GREG SURRATT

Founding Pastor of Seacoast Church

President of the Association of Related Churches (ARC) and Author of *Re-Visioning Mount Pleasant*, South Carolina

We were created to be relational beings, and yet so many of us live isolated lives. We crave genuine relationships and yet often don't know how to really build them. In his book, *Walking With Lions*, Jonathan Wiggins gives us some practical, challenging, real and very helpful steps toward building relationships that have the potential to not only make our lives better, but also make the world a better place.

HOLLY WAGNER

Co-founding Pastor of Oasis Church and Founder of She Rises

Author of *Find Your Brave*

Los Angeles, California

I have had the immense honor of partnering with Jonathan Wiggins in various capacities over the last ten years. He and his wife Amy are incredible people who lead with humility and an eagerness to grow. In his book, *Walking with Lions*, Jonathan gives us tools and a roadmap to walk in greater connection with God and each other. His concepts aren't just theory—he has walked this out with those he leads. I highly recommend this book!

KIM WALKER-SMITH

Singer, Songwriter for the label, Jesus Culture

Sacramento, California

arc RESOURCES

HOW-TO SERIES

WALKING WITH LIONS

HOW TO FIND
TRUE COURAGE & ENDURING STRENGTH
THROUGH
GOD-HONORING RELATIONSHIPS

JONATHAN WIGGINS
FOREWORD BY JOHN C. MAXWELL



MY BROTHER RANDALL, ME,
AND OUR COUSIN BRIAN

JULY 1986



NOTHING WITHOUT GOD CELEBRATION → FUNDING CHURCH PLANTERS IN COLORADO
JOSHUA ANDERSON + TONY DOLAND + DRAKE ELKINS + JOSH MCGINLEY +
JON BRANNBERG + BRANDON CORMIER + BRADY WRIGHT



MISS MOLLY
& MYSELF

NOVEMBER
1996



(ALTHOUGH SHE LOST
HER VISION AT 21, MISS
MOLLY WAS THE MOST
PERCEPTIVE PERSON
'VE EVER KNOWN.)



KODAK PORTRAITA 400

27

KODAK PORTRAITA 400

KODAK PORTRAITA 400

25

PORTRAITA 400



20

20A

DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
Molly Clark Hartick.

"MISS MOLLY" WAS A FAMILY THERAPIST
WHO WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN HELPING ME
HEAL FROM PAST HURTS
USING MANY OF THE PRINCIPLES NOW
ARTICULATED IN THIS BOOK.

HER LEGACY OF
**LIGHT + HOPE +
RESTORATION & HEALING**
ENDURES IN MY LIFE AND COUNTLESS OTHERS.

thank you Miss Molly

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PROFITS FROM THIS BOOK GO TOWARD PLANTING CHURCHES THROUGH THE ASSOCIATION OF RELATED CHURCHES.

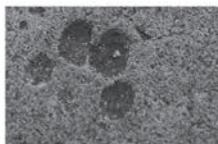
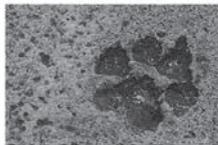


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FOREWORD

In the two years I've known Jonathan, we've shared hunting trips, many meals, and meaningful conversations. Nothing has been off limits. We've shared our stories, our dreams, and our plans for the future. Early in our relationship, the concepts he shares in this book were forming in his mind, but I could tell he has a God-given gift to distill complex thoughts into principles everyone can grasp and apply. That's what I've been trying to do in my writing for decades, and I appreciate it when I see it in others.

Leadership isn't about positions, and it's not about power; it's about people. We can't lead others without building a relationship with them—a bond based on trust and respect. Without it, nothing is possible . . . with it, all things are possible. All of us want to be effective, but success isn't primarily about sales and market share in business or the number of people in

worship on Sundays. The very best leaders understand that the true measure of success is helping other leaders grow, develop, and have a greater impact. And they model the powerful blend of kindness and a bold vision for progress.

I've seen Jonathan's commitment to genuine connections in his relationships with people inside and outside the church. He has waded into conversations with people who were, at first, antagonistic to believers. Too many pastors and other Christians see those outside the body as enemies, or at least nuisances. Jonathan sees them as real people with real hopes and dreams. For him, love knows no bounds.

In *Walking with Lions*, Jonathan explains that people from every background bring something valuable to relationships. Those who have experienced a lifetime of love and encouragement bring security and joy, and those who have suffered heartaches and loss bring the healing they've experienced so that others will be comforted and inspired. Jonathan is in the second group, and I have the greatest admiration for him and people like him.

The process outlined in this book will challenge you to be more honest—first with yourself and God, and then with a few trustworthy people. Following this process produces “an innovative disruption.” It changes the nature of relationships by stripping away the facades so that we genuinely know, love, and trust each other more than ever. For those who want richer, stronger, life-affirming yet life-changing relationships, this book is a game-changer. This, I'm convinced, is the way to become a better leader (and spouse and parent and friend).

Jonathan, his wife Amy, and the Rez.Church family are God-given gifts to me. They have partnered with our nonprofit, Equip, which has trained six

million leaders around the world, and they're valued partners in our new venture, Transformation, which is designed to have an impact on the leaders in business, government, education, the arts, and medicine in these countries. I'm honored to recommend his book to you. I can't wait to see how God uses Jonathan's message to transform individuals in the church, in families, and even in the business community. God has made us for relationships . . . this book is a gateway to the kind of connections God wants for all of us. Don't miss it!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Maxwell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

JOHN C. MAXWELL

Bestselling Author



KEZ.CHURCH
10 Year Anniversary Party

CHURCH LEADERSHIP
FRIENDS & FAMILY

JUNE 19, 2020

INTRODUCTION

*Is this possible?
Do the people on our team even want this?
Do I really want this?*

These are the questions I asked myself when I came back from a retreat with other pastors and church leaders. On the first day of the four-day event in Montana, I didn't know anyone, but by the end, we'd formed genuine and enduring friendships. I wondered if the process I had just experienced was at all repeatable and transferable. I hoped it was, but I wasn't sure.

Our team was performing and producing at a high level. We had implemented world-class processes, followed the proven models of successful leaders, created engaging worship experiences and used creative strategies to reach our community. We were running on all cylinders as a staff team... still, something seemed to be hollow, missing.

The New Testament paints a multifaceted picture of spiritual growth, including the truth of the Word of God, the power of the Spirit of God, and the encouragement of the people of God. There are, by one scholar's count,

fifty-nine “one another” passages. I wondered, *What if we actually lived out those passages on our team? What difference would it make?* That’s what I’d experienced at the retreat, and I really wanted our team to have access to the kind of intentionality in building relationships I’d experienced there.

When I first talked to a few key leaders on our team about it, they were, shall we say, less than enthusiastic. I’m sure I didn’t explain it completely, so they initially assumed I was asking them to join in something like an emotionally exposing “confession-fest.” A couple of them had the guts to express themselves honestly. One told me, “Pastor Jonathan, I don’t know if I want to risk being transparent with you on a personal level . . . After all, you’re the guy who has the power to fire me.” Another asked, “Do you really think we’ll be completely honest about the junk in our lives when the people listening are in the offices down the hall—and we see them every day?” To me, these seemed like legitimate comments that deserved good responses.

Consequently, I developed a very clear plan and process that would empower my team at Rez to pursue this process on their terms and at their pace. I sent each one an invitation to engage with me in what became a five-step process:

★ RELATE + TRUST + DISCLOSE + PROCESS + INTEGRATE ★

One by one, each person on the team accepted the invitation and engaged in the steps I had laid out for us. Later, a couple of them told me they’d had very limited expectations. They thought the process might lead to a stimulating conversation or two, some helpful leadership advice, or an encouraging pep talk that would energize them to perform better. But the results, we all discovered, were infinitely more valuable.

Over time something really powerful began to happen: we had conversations we'd never imagined before. Nothing was forced and no one was "guilted" to say more than they wanted to, but as trust was built, each of us peeled off layers of self-protection that had kept others from really knowing us. We began to disclose areas of our lives that few people, if any, knew about us—our struggles, failures, doubts, questions, shame, and the inner-life that we had worked so hard to conceal, outperform, and will our way out of. We had all experienced "church accountability" before, but this was different. This wasn't just a session of gut-wrenching confession to get something off of our chest and then a quick prayer. This was a gradual process of choosing to live in the light of genuine community and the power of the Spirit. We were experiencing the grace of the "one another" life so often encouraged in the Scriptures.

We spent many hours engaging in this process. It was challenging, rewarding, humbling, stimulating, disarming, and empowering. The walls of compartmentalization that we had carefully constructed over decades began to feel unnecessary and unhelpful. As those walls came down, we were enabled to live the kind of integrated life that God wants for us... catalyzing growth like we'd never known.

The ripple effect has been amazing. People on the team have repeatedly told me that their honesty and security has had an impact on their marriages, their relationships with their children, their leadership of their ministry teams, and their friendships inside and outside the church. The people who office next to us are no longer just coworkers. They're brothers in arms who truly know us, fight for us, protect us, challenge

“

WE WERE

EXPERIENCING

THE GRACE

OF THE "ONE

ANOTHER"

LIFE SO OFTEN

ENCOURAGED

IN THE

SCRIPTURES.

us, and above all, love us. Isolation began to disappear. The individual departments were no longer islands. Our production as a team increased beyond what great leadership methodology alone could produce. We were united not only in mission, but in heart.

My wife Amy led our female team leaders through the same process with great success. The process outlined in this book has become a very effective empowerment mechanism for the women on our team.

Eventually, my team of guys carved out times to go to the mountains together for our own version of the Montana retreat. During one of our trips, a leader who facilitated team building for our group compared the healthy and powerful alliances we were forming to a pride of lions. “Lions run with lions” was a phrase that resonated with us, and we began to call ourselves “the lions.” After the trip, one of the men from our team gave each of us a wood carving that reads, **“All of my friends are lions.”**

I thought of nature programs that show how lions work together to capture their prey. There are risks for a lion living in a group and hunting together with other powerful creatures, but lone lions don’t make it very long. Neither do lone leaders. It takes courage to be a lion in a group. That’s our team’s commitment, and because of it we are all better, stronger, and healthier.

Let this book serve as a roadmap, an inspiration, and an invitation for you to walk with lions.

THE GREATEST FEAR IN THE WORLD IS

THE OPINION OF OTHERS.

AND THE MOMENT YOU ARE

UNAFRAID OF THE CROWD

YOU ARE NO LONGER A SHEEP.

YOU BECOME A LION.



A GREAT ROAR

ARISES IN YOUR HEART.

THE ROAR OF FREEDOM.

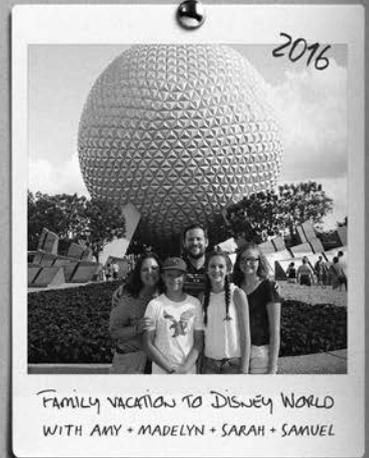




THE REFUGE
Fort Scott, Kansas

JOSHUA BOYETT
ZACH SANCHEZ
LONDON HAIRGROVE

MAY 2020



FAMILY VACATION TO DISNEY WORLD
WITH AMY + MADELYN + SARAH + SAMUEL

LIONS
RUN
with
LIONS.



- BRIAN CARPENTER -

CREATED TO CONNECT

Years ago, my wife Amy and I decided to blow our entire IRS refund on our first trip to Disney World for us and our kids. We had a blast! We rode every ride and ate at every shop—at least, that’s the way it seemed—and we had our pictures taken with all the characters. I rode the Tower of Terror with the kids. (Amy opted out of that one.) We screamed at the drops and held our breath with wide-eyed anticipation on the lifts. We even enjoyed waiting in the long lines because we talked incessantly about what was coming next. Nothing could stop us from having the time of our lives. Disney instantly became an integral element in our family’s DNA.

A few years later, Amy said, “I’d like to go to Disneyland, but just with you this time.”

I responded, “Awesome! Let’s do it.”

Again, I wanted to ride the Tower of Terror (renamed Guardians of the Galaxy — Mission: Breakout!), and again, Amy said she had better things to do than self-imposed torture. She doesn’t even like elevators, and this ride... well, it’s a little more intense than standing in an elevator. She found something else to do as I got in line, but this time, there was no one to talk

to, no one to laugh with, and no one to share the anticipation of the thrill of the ride. I was bored and I felt alone in a crowd of people at “the happiest place on earth.” In my self-imposed silence, I overheard the conversation of some college-age kids in front of me. In fact, they were about the age of my oldest son, Nathan. Something in my brain must have unconsciously shifted because I gradually identified something about them with my children. One of the girls made a joke, and we all laughed. That’s the point: we . . . *all* . . . laughed. She turned and glared at me with a stink-eye as if to say, “You are such a creep!” I turned away and tried to act like not-a-creep! (That’s harder to do than you might imagine.) Thankfully, they ignored me the rest of the weeks we were in line together. (Okay, it was only about fifteen more minutes, but it seemed like weeks.) I wanted to disintegrate or evaporate because being near those kids felt so incredibly awkward.

And I didn’t enjoy the ride, either. The whole experience fell flat because there was no one to share it with me.

KNOWN AND LOVED — THE HOPE AND THE RISK

God has made us relational creatures. We like to put people into two categories: extroverts and introverts, but I’m afraid many people misunderstand these concepts. When psychiatrist Carl Jung originally coined the terms, he put them as ends of a long continuum, and he insisted that no one is on the extremes. In other words, all of us have some characteristics of both. Still, it’s helpful to understand the difference between the two sides of the spectrum. It’s not that extroverts enjoy people and introverts prefer to be alone. That’s the common misunderstanding. Instead, think of it as answering the question: How are people charged and recharged? People who lean toward the extrovert side get energy from being with people, and their

energy fades when they spend too much time alone. Conversely, those who lean toward the introvert side enjoy being with people, but not too many, too long, or too often. Their levels of creativity and energy rise when they're alone (or perhaps with only one or two people) long enough to think, read, plan, and pray. Extroverts and introverts are electric cords looking for a socket, but they're looking for different sockets.

My point is that people at both extremes have an innate desire, a need, and maybe even a compulsion to be thoroughly known and deeply loved—both, not one or the other. They may express and receive love in different ways, but the need is powerful and immediate in both of them. Author and pastor Tim Keller observes, “To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.”¹

Deep in all our hearts lurks the fear of being alone. To feel alienated and isolated is torture. Even the most hardened criminals are afraid of solitary confinement, and those who suffer this kind of punishment are often affected long after they reenter the prison population. A report by the American Psychological Association concludes that the nation's 80,000 prisoners in solitary confinement “are at grave risk of psychological harm.” A man who spent eighteen years in prison, including ten in solitary, for a murder he didn't commit, explains, “I would watch guys come to prison totally sane, and in three years they don't live in the real world anymore.” Doctor and

“

DEEP IN ALL
OUR HEARTS
LURKS THE
FEAR OF
BEING ALONE.
TO FEEL
ALIENATED
AND ISOLATED
IS TORTURE.

professor Craig Haney concludes, “One of the very serious psychological consequences of solitary confinement is that it renders many people incapable of living anywhere else. They actually get to the point where they become frightened of other human beings.” When they are released, either back into the prison population or out of prison, they may have difficulty functioning because they’re overwhelmed with anxiety caused by prolonged relational disconnection.²

Some people have told me they’re “not wired” the way other people are, so they don’t need relationships. For them and many others, there’s a corollary fear: the fear of being exposed. They’re convinced that if other people knew what’s really in their hearts, and if they knew what terrible things they’d done, they’d run away as fast as they could!

I understand the terror associated with being known but not loved. People have developed elaborate ways to “pose” and look secure when they’re terribly afraid of anyone seeing below the surface. In his classic book, *The Four Loves*, C. S. Lewis warned that the fear of exposure carries its own risks:

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.³

And to be loved is liberating. Tommy Walker is a songwriter and performer who was asked by his pastor to write a song to go with a sermon titled, “He

Knows My Name.” The text for the message was Jesus’ familiar assurance in John 10: “The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice” (John 10:3-4). Walker wrote the song, but he didn’t like it very much. He called it “my feeble little act of finishing what I started.”

Sometime later, Walker flew to the Philippines to serve at an orphanage on a short-term missions trip. There he met a seven-year-old boy named Jerry. Every day, Jerry asked him, “Tommy, what’s my name?” And every day, Walker looked him in the eyes, smiled, and said, “Your name is Jerry.” In recalling those encounters, he remembers, “I have to say, not many people on this earth knew this abandoned, extremely poor boy’s name—but I got to tell him that someone much greater than me did, and I got to sing to him and many of his orphan friends this song.”⁴ I think all of us are at least a little bit like Jerry. We want someone to know us, remember us, and call us by name.

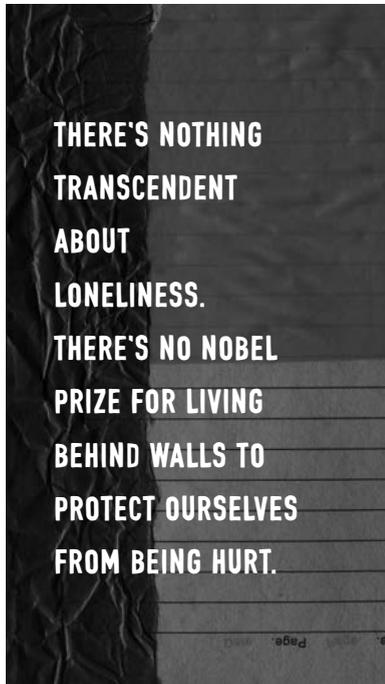
To a great extent, all of us live in the tension between the fear of not being known and the fear of being exposed. We try to cope with the tension in a myriad of ways, and many of us never find a truly safe person who knows the worst about us and loves us still. We can feel alone and unwanted in any size crowd, from two to two thousand. To be isolated is to try to look powerful and confident, but to feel invisible, to remain unknown, to feel insignificant, to put our passion to make a difference on the shelf . . . but to act like everything is “just fine.”

We face real risks when we take a step to be vulnerable. I remember telling my friend (and part of our group of lions) Sethry Connor something

about myself that I'd never told anyone else. As soon as I told him, I realized I was more exposed than I'd ever been. I quickly blurted out, "I'm not sure we can be friends after this!" I wondered if he'd shake his head in disgust, laugh, or find the nearest door. Thankfully, he didn't do any of those things. He listened, asked some great questions, listened even more, and encouraged me. And he shared some things with me that he'd never told anyone. I wondered if I'd have a "vulnerability hangover" the next day. Would I feel ashamed and exposed? Had I given Sethry ammunition to shoot me down when I wasn't expecting an attack? Would I suffer from "confessor's remorse"? Would either or both of us avoid eye contact and try to act like we'd never had the conversation? (Do these questions sound like I was paranoid? No, I'm just being honest about what I was afraid might happen.) Again, my fears were relieved. We affirmed

each other and consolidated the gains we'd made. Over time, Sethry and I developed a sense of brotherhood and close friendship that has made us both better men, fathers, husbands, leaders, and Christ-followers. Each step has been a risk, and each step has been liberating.

But we also take risks when we don't connect with people at a deeper level. We use people instead of loving them. They don't appreciate being pressured so they leave, and we experience a significant churn on our teams. We're poor models of the gospel to the people in our churches, and people outside the church see us as just another organization trying to grow



instead of genuinely demonstrating the heart of Jesus. The risk, then, cuts both ways, but on balance, it's wise to side with Jesus and take the risk to know and love people.

There's nothing transcendent about loneliness. There's no Nobel Prize for living behind walls to protect ourselves from being hurt. We make the wrong kind of difference when we intimidate people to have control over them because we're so insecure. We're less than honest when we act like chameleons, changing what we say and do to please the person in front of us at the moment. The hole in our hearts remains a chasm if we achieve great success but we aren't in relationships where we're loved and we love in return.

We're made for relationships.

DOES IT MATTER?

Many studies have been conducted to determine the effects of healthy, affirming relationships, and the results are unambiguous. Two Harvard studies are representative. The first cites a study in Sweden with people over seventy-five which concluded that the risk of dementia is lowest among those who have strong, satisfying relationships with family and friends. The study found that positive social connections give us pleasure, but relationships also have observable long-term health benefits “every bit as powerful as adequate sleep, a good diet, and not smoking. . . . Conversely, a relative lack of social ties is associated with depression and later-life cognitive decline, as well as with increased mortality. One study, which examined data from more than 309,000 people, found that lack of strong relationships increased the risk of premature death from all causes by 50%—an effect on

mortality risk roughly comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and greater than obesity and physical inactivity.”⁵

A second Harvard report is from a longitudinal study begun during the Great Depression and continuing for eighty years. It looked at contrasting results between men who had been students at Harvard (because there were no women at the school when the study began) and urban men and women. The study found that close, affirming human connections are the most important factor in physical, mental, and psychological health. The report is titled “Good Genes Are Nice, but Joy Is Better,” and states, “Close relationships, more than money or fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives. . . . Those ties protect people from life’s discontents, help to delay mental and physical decline, and are better predictors of long and happy lives than social class, IQ, or even genes. That finding proved true across the board among both the Harvard men and the inner-city participants.”⁶

So, here’s the truth: it doesn’t matter if you’re rich or poor, fit or unhealthy, native or immigrant, powerful or powerless, young or old—meaningful relationships are the most important thing in life.

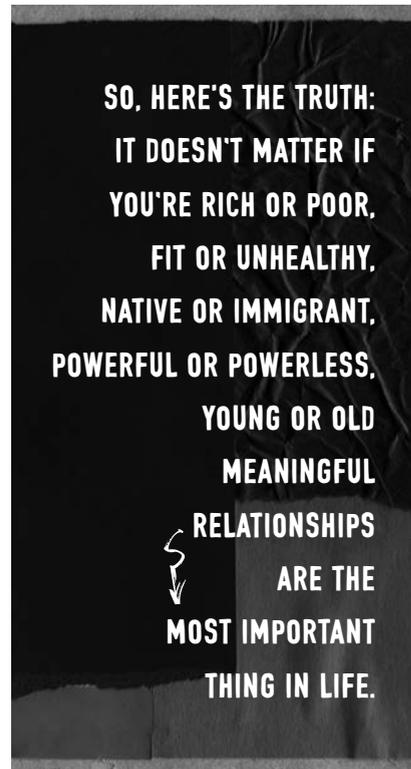
FROM THE BEGINNING

We don’t have to read very far in the Bible to find the importance of relationships. In the creation account in the first chapter of Genesis, we see the refrain, “And God said . . . And God saw that it was good.” The crowning glory of those six days was the creation of a being, Adam, who was unlike anything else that had been made, a man made in the very image of God. And God was in an intimate relationship with him.

Why did God create Adam? Was God lonely? Augustine explained that if God were unipersonal, He would have had to create somebody to give and receive love, but the Trinity shows that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were loving each other for all of eternity.⁷ God didn't create people because He was lonely; He created us because He wanted to share His love with us.

Yet in the next chapter of Genesis, we find Adam working in the Garden, but this time, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). What in the world was "not good"? Adam lived in a perfect environment, had never sinned, was given a meaningful role, and had close communication with the Creator—but there was still something missing. God had created Adam to thrive only when he experienced both a vertical relationship with Him and horizontal relationships with people, and specifically, Eve. God created her and put her in front of Adam, who exclaimed, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23). Many commentators think this was a song. In other words, the Bible opens with a nude man singing Michael Bublé to a nude woman. My friend, it doesn't get any more vulnerable and wonderful than that!

We know the story of their catastrophic fall into sin, and immediately, the first couple sewed fig leaves to cover themselves, and "hid from the Lord God



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BEING ALONE
MAY NOT
SEEM BAD.
BUT IT
CERTAINLY
ISN'T GOOD.

among the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3:8). People have been ashamed and hiding ever since. When God confronted them, Adam told Him, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” His nudity hadn’t been a problem before. When God asked if he had disobeyed and had eaten from the forbidden tree, Adam performed the fine art of blame-shifting: “The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (Genesis 3:10-12). Boom! “It’s not my fault! It’s Eve’s fault . . . and Yours because You gave her to me!” Eve then joined the game by blaming the serpent instead of owning her responsibility (Genesis 3:13).

In this story, we see two kinds of isolation: passive and active. When Adam was working in the Garden before Eve came along, he was doing exactly what he was created to do. He wasn’t lonely because he or his environment was somehow defective. Being alone may not seem bad, but it certainly isn’t good. He needed human connections. But after the fall, Adam and Eve experienced active isolation. They covered up, hid, and blamed others.

I’ve noticed both kinds of isolation in my life. I can sometimes be isolated because I’m engrossed in a project, writing a message, or preoccupied with planning. I’ve learned that it’s not good for me to be passively isolated very long. It’s far more problematic when I actively isolate: blaming others, minimizing a problem, excusing myself for bad behavior, or denying any problem even exists. When I’ve hurt someone or I’m upset with somebody, my natural inclination is to avoid them, and my tendency to hide isn’t limited to unresolved tension. A few years ago when a high school reunion approached, I thought long and hard (in other words, I was anxious) about how much weight I’ve gained, and how my appearance and career would

compare with the old friends I'd see. I thought about not going, but instead, I crafted a plan to present an attractive image. I was sewing fig leaves. When I experience active isolation in any of its forms, I need someone to do for me what God did for Adam and Eve—call me out so I can begin the process of restoration, healing, and growth.

Before the creation, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit enjoyed a perfect relationship of love. God's intention for human beings was to replicate and extend that kind of connection between us and Him and among ourselves, but since the Garden, relationships where we feel totally known and deeply loved have proved elusive. In their place, we've pursued "lesser gods" of power, possessions, and prestige, which promise fulfillment but eventually leave us empty and confused.

WORTH IT

From countless conversations about relationships, I've concluded that everyone, introverts and extroverts, are designed for meaningful connections. Most of us want an ironclad guarantee that if we take the risk to be even a little bit vulnerable, the person will affirm us instead of betraying us. But relationships always involve a measure of risk. The questions are: Who is trustworthy? What's the first step? And is it really worth the risk?

We live in a web of human connections: our parents and siblings, people at work, neighbors, people at church, friends, and our own families. We keep many if not most of these people at arm's length, in many cases for very good reasons. But we need at least one person we trust enough to take one step toward vulnerability. We don't need twenty, and we may not find more than one, but one is enough, at least at the beginning. Solomon

wrote, “One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). That’s what I’ve found, and that’s my hope for you—that you’ll find a true friend, someone who loves without strings attached, is available, and imparts equal measures of grace and truth.

Most of us have built-in resistance to this depth of relationships. We’ve been deeply hurt before, and we certainly don’t want to be hurt again. Some are haunted by secrets we’ve never told a soul. Some are naïve and trust untrustworthy people, and are disappointed again and again. Some of us are driven and busy, and we don’t want any distractions. And some have become numb to our deep longing for a rich, real friendship.

Recognize your hurts and hopes, your longing and your resistance. Acknowledge the passive isolation of busyness and the active isolation which is the product of the fear of exposure. You have to know where you are to have an idea of where you want to go.

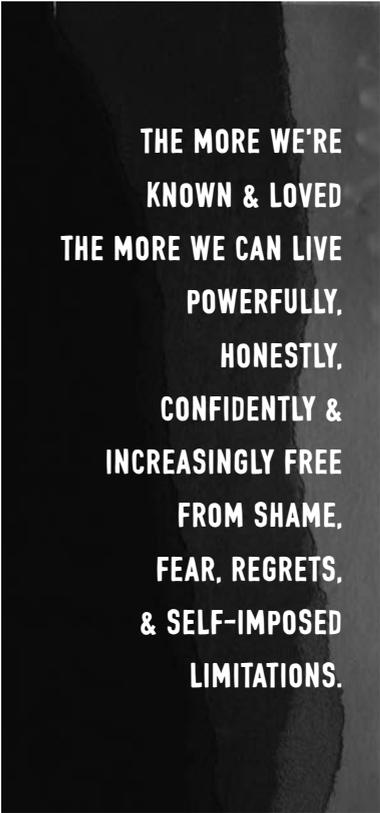
In this book, I want to provide clear steps forward. All of them can be summarized like this: Find a trustworthy person, weigh the risks, and take a step away from hiding and toward vulnerability...just one step. The more we’re known and loved, the more we can live powerfully, honestly, confidently, and increasingly free from shame, fear, regrets, and self-imposed limitations.

The message of this book is for individuals, small groups, teams, couples, families, mentors, and friends. I’m not asking anyone to take a giant leap from isolation to complete vulnerability. I’m only encouraging each of us to take one step, and when we feel more secure, to take another one. I want the principles in this book to lower the level of risk so we can

gradually create the kind of relationships that transform lives.

MY PROMISE

I promise that I'm not going to push you to do anything you don't want to do. Each step is completely up to you. Trust is the currency of relationships, and for many, their trust account is deep in the red. It has been shattered by the trauma of abuse, or it has been gradually eroded by a thousand minimizing, degrading voices. Relationships can only go as deep as trust has been established, and trust must be earned; it can't be demanded. Trust is built or restored slowly as people prove they're worthy of trust.



**THE MORE WE'RE
KNOWN & LOVED
THE MORE WE CAN LIVE
POWERFULLY,
HONESTLY,
CONFIDENTLY &
INCREASINGLY FREE
FROM SHAME,
FEAR, REGRETS,
& SELF-IMPOSED
LIMITATIONS.**

In this book, I'll tell my story and share the principles I've learned about creating stronger, deeper, richer relationships on a team and throughout a church, but this isn't the only way to do it. You may find other authors and teachers who have the same goal but a different process. Whether you use my book or theirs, do whatever it takes to create this kind of culture. It matters . . . it matters a lot.

Let me give you a quick overview of where we're going: The first six chapters set the stage. They're an invitation (a long but important one) to evaluate your eagerness or reluctance to trust and consider how trust

can be earned. The last six chapters outline practical steps to have richer, stronger relationships.

Isn't that what you want? Isn't that why you're reading this book?

JACKIE AND ERNIE

Let me end the chapter with this story: Jackie and her husband Ernie were an older couple who attended our church. I didn't know them very well, but when I found out he had died, I went to see her. She asked me to speak at his funeral, and I felt honored. Instead of preaching sermons at funerals, I've made it a practice to interview family members and tell their stories about the one they love. When I met with Jackie, she told me a beautiful love story. When Ernie was fifteen, he faked his ID so he could get a pilot's license. He soon learned the skill of crop-dusting. She was fascinated by this daring, handsome young man, and they fell in love. Probably in his very best Humphrey Bogart voice, he told her, "Stick with me, kid. We're going places!" They got married, and a few years later they traveled all over the world as he taught pilots to fly crop dusters.

At one point, they lived in Kenya. They had an agreement that if Ernie saw something interesting on his flight that day—like lions, elephants, herds of wildebeests, or something equally amazing—he'd fly low over their duplex so she'd know to meet him at the airfield. A crop duster has only one seat, so he put a Pepsi crate behind the pilot's seat where she could sit and look out the window. Each time they flew together, the sun was setting, and Ernie showed Jackie amazing sights she would never forget. I can picture the two of them in that tiny cockpit, smiling as they soared over the plains full of exotic animals.

Many years later when they retired, Ernie built their dream home in Florida. As Jackie finished telling me their story, she sat back and smiled. She reminisced, “Ernie made so many of my dreams come true.”

At that moment, I realized I didn’t even know what Amy’s dreams were, or my kids’ dreams, or my best friends’ dreams, because I’d never asked.

I went home that night and began conversations with Amy and the children about their highest hopes and biggest dreams. We did some pretty crazy things to fulfill them, including buying an RV and putting 25,000 miles on it in the first year. We went places we’d always wanted to go but had seldom if ever told each other about.

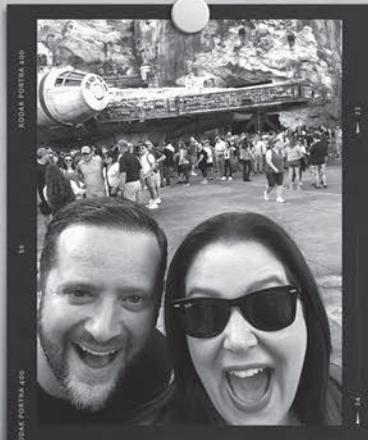
I could have gone through the motions to do Ernie’s funeral, but asking Jackie to tell me their love story impacted my life, opened my eyes, and showed me the beauty of two people who were far more than roommates. God has created us for connections. You need at least one true friend who always lets you in but never lets you down—or at least, that’s the intention. ⁸Can you find that person? Will you be that person for someone else? As the friendships on our staff team have developed and deepened, we began to call ourselves “lions” because it implies courage. It takes courage to stop posing and begin living in truth. Maybe you’ll find a group of lions to run with. That’s my hope for you.

At the end of each chapter, you’ll find some questions designed to encourage personal reflection and stimulate discussion. Don’t rush through these. Take time to think, pray, talk, and identify your next steps.



THE WIGGINS FAMILY
1985

WITH RANDALL + OUR GRANDMOTHER.
1978



DISNEYLAND
JANUARY 2020

*reflect on
what
you've
read*



1

Who knows your dreams?

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2

Whose dreams do you know and value? Whose dreams do you need to know better?

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3

Describe the similarities and differences between passive and active isolation.

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What are ways you've seen people try to cope with their sense of isolation?

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Have you experienced the fear of being known but not loved, or the emptiness of being loved but not known? Explain your answer.

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6

What do you hope to get out of this book?

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arc RESOURCES

HOW-TO SERIES

SERVE YOUR CITY by Dino Rizzo

Through the pages of the Gospels, we see Jesus model a “show and tell” like and ministry to His followers—He “showed” them how to serve by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and caring for the poor—and while He was demonstrating compassion, He taught them, “telling” them of God’s immense love. This is the way to break down barriers so people will listen to the life-changing message of the gospel of grace.

In *Serve Your City*, you’ll sense Dino Rizzo’s heart, be inspired by his stories, and learn from his experiences, as well as many ARC churches that are serving their cities with a Jesus-style, no-strings-attached kind of love. This is at the core of who ARC is—a deep passion to see churches thrive as part of the cities they serve.



RE-VISIONING by Greg Surratt

Vision. It can be a very slippery thing. As leaders, we can have a crystal-clear sense of purpose and direction at some points, but they may seem like foreign objects from time to time. Sooner or later, it happens to all of us. In this book, Pastor Greg Surratt shares his story of asking himself hard questions . . . and finding the answers to be both surprising and inspiring. He addresses the crucial topics of limitations, culture, and legacy, but he also dives into harder issues of how to handle heartaches and what actually captures the hearts of the people we lead.

Re-Visioning is designed to recharge our leadership batteries and equip us to inspire our teams with humility, boldness, and joy. Greg is a pioneer in church planting and multi-site strategy. Leaders in all sizes of churches and across the spectrum of denominations value his insights, his heart, and his blend of kindness and tenacity in advancing God’s kingdom.

