

Connect

Introduction: The world has never been more connected. Companies are laying millions of miles of fiber optics and shooting satellites into space. Kids all around the world are texting each other on cell phones – even in the midst of jungles. Yet I talk to people all the time who feel more and more disconnected. They feel like they're out of it. Our fast-moving lives have wreaked havoc on our relationships. We don't feel nearly as connected to each other as people did a generation ago. These days we can close our electronic garage door and step into our house without even greeting our neighbors.

What do Legos and human beings have in common? Both are designed to connect. A Lego by itself does not have a whole lot of purpose. A Lego is designed to be part of a greater purpose. It is designed to be a part of a greater whole. A Lego by itself is not a whole lot, but the bottom line is that a Lego is designed to connect.

Here are four great word pictures of the New Testament church. Why? These metaphors tell us a lot about why God wants us to connect with one another. They give us a picture of what the church should be – and how it should alleviate the plague of disconnection in our society.

The Bible says that that being spiritually connected means:

1. WE'RE BUILT like a building. "

Ephesians 2:22 *In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* We are meant to fit together like bricks in a new building. It's essential that the parts of a building fit together. You aren't safe otherwise because there's no support. Likewise, those who aren't connected to a church family in any meaningful way have no support. Life is tough. We all need the support of people who care about us. Your church can provide that for the aimless multitude in your community.

2. WE'RE JOINED in a body. "

Romans 12:4-5 *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.* What Jesus Christ did when he was here in his physical body, he wants to do today through the church. We are the body of Christ on Earth. We are his hands. We are his feet. All of us have to play our part. Being part of the body of Christ means we are a part of something bigger than ourselves, and if we don't play our specific part, the mission of the church is impacted.

3. WE'RE BORN into a family. "

1 Timothy 3:15 *But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.* This is my favorite metaphor for the church. It doesn't take any explanation. Most people think that Christianity is a **belief** system. There are beliefs in Christianity, but it's so much more. Christianity is a **belong** system. The Bible says we were born again into God's family. It also says that we've been adopted into God's family. Both are great metaphors for what it should mean to be a part of the church.

Because we are part of God's family, we should accept one another and love one another. We don't approve of everyone's behavior. That's not love. If someone is doing something hurtful, approval is the opposite of love. But we must accept and love one another. Your family hasn't always approved of everything you've done, but – I hope – they've loved you anyway.

4. WE'RE ATTACHED to a vine. "

John 15:4 *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* Being connected isn't just a **horizontal** issue. It's a **vertical** one as well. Jesus says when we are connected to Him it's like being attached to a vine. Fruit not connected to a vine dies. It's that simple. We can have all the interpersonal relationships possible, but if they are not connecting to God, they will not have the life that God wants them to have.

Paul continues Jesus' metaphor when he talks about the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. When we're connected to the True Vine, there will be certain

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spiritual fruit in our lives – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control. If you're connected with God, those fruit will characterize your life. And that's the kind of connection we all want.