

This week Pastor Sasha brings us Part 4 of the six-part series "40 Days of Community" with the message entitled "How We Help Each Other Grow." At Vineyard, we are engaged in both a study and a growth opportunity with "40 Days of Community." This is a chance for each of us to develop new friendships, deepen old ones, and expand our ability to love others. As you focus on growing in Christ, consider ways you might help others grow.

First, you can help others grow by affirming their worth. Ask yourself: How can I show that I love this person? How can I take note of this person's good qualities, or praise them for their efforts? If you begin to acknowledge others' value, you will see how other people will appreciate you more and value your friendship.

What are some of the ways you affirm someone's value? First, you affirm someone's value by accepting their differences. If you love only those people who are like you, how will you ever grow? Stop insisting that everyone be just like you and try accepting people who look, act, and think differently from yourself.

Next, you can affirm someone's value by giving them your attention. Everyone likes to be noticed and listened to. It's often said that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. You can care for someone today just by listening to them.

You also affirm another person's value by showing affection. Do you greet people warmly? Do you give them your best smile, a firm handshake, or a tender hug? It has been found that an adult needs 7-9 meaningful touches a day. Go out and help everybody meet their quota!

The final way to affirm others is to show appreciation for them. When you appreciate something, you add value to it. Make an effort to show appreciation for the people in your small group. Tell your group leader what a great job he or she is doing. Thank the host for making their home available. Tell the quiet one you appreciate them for showing up. See how your gestures of kindness raise these people in their confidence and self worth.

After affirming their worth, another way to help someone grow is to pray for their growth. In Colossians, Paul wrote to the church in Colossae that Epaphras "always prays that you will grow to be spiritually mature." This is a great prayer that you can pray for everyone in your group. Make a personal commitment to pray for the growth and development of your group members every day and see what God does in their lives.

When all is said and done, you can help a brother or sister in Christ grow by simply admitting to your own mistakes. Tell them when you make a mistake and allowing them to be a part of your being reconciled within the body. As much as you can, be open about past sin and allow your small group to help you become free from that. True emotional healing comes when we learn to be honest with ourselves and with others.

You can see the importance of making an effort to help others grow. In fact, you may be able to see more clearly how others have been trying to help you! Pay it forward by giving someone else that same gift of affirmation, prayer support, and honesty about yourself. What are some ways you can start doing this right now?