



Add the Dash: How we relate to God and each other.

A dash is a pretty small printed character (-) but when it is placed between two dates following someone's name it can indicate a whole life time! (i.e. John Bunyan 1628 -1688).

In this study we will use the idea of the dash to represent how we relate together. Read Hebrews 10:24, 25. *Can you think of other words we could use to represent the dash?*

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

How have you experienced this type of encouragement that is spoken about in the passage?

The beginning of this path of encouragement starts with **story**:
“Tell me your story and I’ll tell you mine”.

Vince and Jim have been going to Kortright for many years. They hardly knew each other but a mission's trip to Nicaragua, really changed things. What was missing before that trip? Sometimes at church it is hard time to learn stories. *What has helped you get to know other's stories?*

Stories are important whether you are inside of the church or not. Look what happens when we put in the dash! This is what Gord Jones calls a “hyphenated reality”.

- “Jim” is a reality.
- “Gord” is a reality.
- “Jim-Gord” is a different reality from either of the two.

This dash develops when some kind of initiative is taken and some kind of commitment forms in relationships. It can have different levels of intensity. When we begin to talk, learn about the other and serve together in something then a change happens. A “your story-my story” bond occurs. As it deepens, it becomes “our story”. Shared realities, common interests and deepening passions will strengthen the dash. This dash can also describe our relationship with God. God erupts into “our story” and begins to make “His story”. True transformation takes place when Jesus Christ is central to this process.

Jesus referred to this relationship as Eternal Life. The Message Bible uses slightly different terminology. *What is Jesus saying about real (eternal) life? Describe some of the characteristics or discoveries of the “you-God” relationship.*

“ It's urgent that you listen carefully to this: Anyone here who believes what I am saying right now and aligns himself with the Father, who has in fact put me in charge, has at this very moment the real, lasting life and is no longer condemned to be an outsider. This person has taken a giant step from the world of the dead to the world of the living.” John 5:24 The Message

Read Hebrews 10:22-25 in The Message and *underline the action verbs*:

“So let's do it—full of belief, confident that we're presentable inside and out. Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word. Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.”

Can you find any “hyphenated realities” in this passage?

- *What kind of relationships does this passage assume?*
- *How is this aided by knowing each other's story?*
- *Consider how difficult it is to apply the verbs of the passage when you don't know the other people.*
- *If you knew the story of a friend who is a non Christian and she/he really knew yours, how would this relationship affect sharing the hope and assurance that this passage talks about?*
- *Do you think men and women “add the dash” the same way?*
- *What erases the dash?*
- *What is “The Day that is approaching” in Hebrews 10:25 and how does that affect the dash?*

Going deeper:

- *A helpful Old Testament passage is the Creation account, Genesis 1:26-30 and 2:18-25.*
- *Can you find evidence of the dash: person-person, person-him/herself, person-creation, person-God?*
- *How did sin disrupt these relationships? See Genesis 3.*

Summarize key ideas about the dash and list questions for further study. Have someone pray. Tell your story to someone this week and ask to hear theirs.