

CHURCH @ CHURCH

Introduction to C.U.R.E.

The five steps

Simon and Ethan met at a BBQ hosted by a mutual friend. They discovered that they both enjoyed rugby and music and had attended some of the same concerts over the years.

Both were active members of their respective churches.

After several hours of conversation, Simon said to Ethan jokingly: "Man, I really lose my temper at my kids sometimes. They can be so frustrating, you know?"

Ethan nodded. "Oh yeah, happens to all of us, mate. Have I told you about how I once lost my temper at a cab driver?" He laughed. "That was epic!"

How do we serve each other in love?

The steps are designed to help you help yourself or help other people.

The steps are transportable in any context. The steps apply to any age or culture or gender. They're useful whether you are going well or struggling. They can be used with a spouse or an acquaintance. They can cover any issue, whether serious or light. You can use them as easily with an aging parent as with a struggling teenager.

The key to understanding the steps is to acknowledge that there is a sequence which should be followed. They're steps rather than rungs in a ladder. When climbing a ladder, you may not need the lower rungs once you've used them and you may not bother to look down. In fact, the previous rungs could disappear altogether and it wouldn't bother you as you ascended. But with the steps, you will find yourself moving along the steps and back again as you seek to connect and truly understand someone.

Can you see what happened here during this conversation?

Simon showed some vulnerability, even though it was cloaked in a joking way. Ethan's response was some fleeting sympathy followed by turning the conversation to himself.

Has this ever happened to you? Do you remember how that made you feel? Maybe you felt unimportant and unheard. Maybe this is something you do when other people are trying to talk to you, whether unintentionally or otherwise.

When we have this sensation that the other person is not really listening to us, we have missed out on connection. In the context of trying to build a relationship with someone, missing out on this first crucial step of connection can often damage the relationship right from the start.

How do we show others that we are genuinely listening to them, that we hear them and that we understand them? How do we genuinely make that first connection?

Dr John Warlow has been working as a clinical psychiatrist for more than twenty-five years, and knows that genuinely connecting with people is one of the first steps to understanding who they are and being able to build a relationship with them.

Based on his years of experience, he describes the connection and deepening of a relationship through the steps of C.U.R.E. The steps of C.U.R.E. are designed to help bring about God-centred transformation of the whole person, spiritually, personally and socially.

Most of us are not clinical psychiatrists, but we have people in our lives we care about. Our spouses, our children, our siblings, our parents, our friends, our colleagues, people we mentor, those who mentor us: all have important places in our lives, and we at various times may want to deepen our relationships with them.

The apostle Paul pleads with us that in our relationships with each other we model the love of Jesus.

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." – Galatians 5:13

And so the question inevitably arises: how do I help a person during a time of struggle, change or pain? How do I help myself through the same? Is there something that will teach me what to do, even when faced with very different issues? Is there something that can work no matter the age, gender or culture of the other person?

Why do I need to learn this?

Learning the steps is like learning a new language. This is a language that gives you skills in any situation where you don't need special training or a presentation. The language speaks to the issues of God-centred transformation of the whole person, spiritually, personally and socially.

This language is crucial if you want to grow yourself, help others around you grow, to grow the whole church, to go to the whole world, with the whole Gospel.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” – Ephesians 4:32

Connect

Sometimes our first instinct when trying to connect with someone is to fix their problem, or freak out about their problem, or run away from their problem. It is comforting to know that all we need to do is listen to their problem. Listening is often the correct response in and of itself – but now we're getting ahead of ourselves.

It is often necessary – in fact, crucial - to connect and understand prior to response is even considered. As we instinctively know, building relationship first is usually the only way we can truly get to know someone.

Connecting and understanding – perhaps colloquially known as walking in someone else's shoes - is more than 50% of the response. Building a relationship with someone is actually more about listening with understanding than anything else. But often, this feels like doing nothing. It's okay to feel like you're doing nothing – this may be just what someone needs.

Connecting may be just what somebody needs to prevent people from moving closer to disaster.

Understand

The main way to understand someone is to ask open questions. To have the capacity to understand someone, is to know someone. It's not enough to know someone at a superficial level; this is knowing someone as they really are.

You can love someone without knowing who they are, so sometimes love is not enough. Biblically, to know someone is very powerful. It is a universal need of every human being.

“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 a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything.”

- Timothy Keller

Imagine understanding as a tennis court. You have built the court based on the foundation of connecting, and you both stand ready to play a game. You ask a question and listen to the answer.

A point of view is the ball that bounces between the two players. One person is asking for the other's point of view and listening to the answer (not thinking about their next volley!).

When you take turns to serve, to listen, to reflect, to concentrate on the other person's point of view, then you both win the game. Because when both points of view are heard and understood, you both win.

Respond

You can begin to respond when there is a sense that you are starting to know the person and understand their point of view.

Keep asking questions. A response question is open-ended, not a leading question.

“Where to from here?” “What do you think could help you at this point?” “What do you think you need?”

The truth is that they may not know what they need, and you may not either. It's okay not to have a clue. Here you can think about practical ways that might help. How can you show the love of God toward that person?

Always give the person a choice. You might ask if having some meals made would help. Or a regular catch-up for coffee.

5. EVALUATE

for you, then others

4. ENGAGE HELP

the pyramid corners

3. RESPOND

utilising their skills & yours

2. UNDERSTAND

know and be known

1. CONNECT

in S.A.F.E.TY.

Engage and Evaluate

Engage other help. You don't need to do this on your own.

Who else can help? You engage as a friend, as a spouse, or as a parent. Other helpers might be church, friends, small group or professional helpers like counsellors or a GP.

Another way of enlisting help in a non-threatening way is to find books or websites that might help. For example, you could find a resource on parenting or a book about living with anxiety.

Continue to ask open questions like, “what might it be like for you to talk with someone you really could trust about this?” and “what kind of person might that be?” As specific question like this can be okay, in the context of open questions: “I've recently read a book about this that really helped me. Would you like a copy of it?”

Always give them the choice.

The final step is to evaluate. As mentioned, you might find yourself moving up and down the steps. Human relationships are complex, and connection can be won and lost over time. You aren't doing something wrong if you find yourself moving backwards down the steps, trying to re-connect with someone.

Christians are commanded in the Bible many times over to live in a loving community, to care for each other and to grow each other in Jesus. The literal translation of Ephesians 4:15 “speaking the truth in love” is “truthing in love.” Not just words, but actions. We are commanded to act out the truth of the Gospel with each other and the world.

The Steps of C.U.R.E. will help you to ‘truth in love’.