**Devoted**

**Acts 2:42** “They **devoted** themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

**Vision statement:** (Common-unity)

Ground zero church is an Acts chapter two style of community of disciples who seek to reflect the character of Christ by cultivating friendships and embracing all believers as family.

**(Gznaz.org title page) YOUR FRIENDS GO HERE**

When asked, “Why do you go to Ground Zero Church?” We want people to say, “because my friends go here.” People are longing for meaningful and wholesome relationships. Covid isolation and an increased digital age have greatly increased this need. God has put us here for each other and for this community.

**Psalms 68:5-6**

“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,

is God in his holy dwelling.

God sets the lonely in families,

He leads forth the prisoners with singing;

But the rebellious will live in a sun scorched land”

The early church had great unity and the Lord added to their number frequently. We need to be intentional about maintaining this same unity. People's lives depend on it.

**Part 4. Relational Generosity**

**Matthew 18:21-35**  **The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant**

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2018%3A21-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23752b)] was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.“At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

1. **For(give)-**

Notice the word “give” in “forgive”. When we forgive each other we are exercising great generosity towards each other. When someone wrongs you, a debt has been created that needs to be paid for. To forgive is to generously pay the debt for another. That's how Jesus saw it and that is why he told the parable of the unmerciful servant to illustrate his point of forgiveness.

There are many of us who, unlike the man in Jesus' parable, are very generous with our time and even generous with our finances. Many of us will gladly give our time to something we care about. Others may not have time however they will give financially. However, many of us are generous with our time and or money and not relationally generous. If we're honest, many of us are still walking around like there are people in our lives who we believe owe us something because of how they have wronged us in the past. If they have wronged us they do owe us something. A debt has been created between us that needs to be paid. Relational generosity is volunteering to pay (Forgive) the debt between yourself and the one who has wronged you.

1. **77 times**

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

In the scripture the number “7” symbolizes completeness or fullness.

When Peter asks Jesus if he should forgive his brother up to seven times he doesn’t literally mean 7 times but he is speaking of someone who has so “completely” sinned against him so many times and so badly that he has every reason not to forgive them and to make them pay for what they have done.

Jesus’ response communicates, yes forgive them and even more. “Not seven but seven times seven”.

This too is not meant to be literal. We are not supposed to keep a tally of all 77 times someone has wronged us and then not forgive on the 78th time. We are supposed to forgive every time in spite of the great debt.

1. **The Cost**

You may be thinking, Jesus I hear you but you just don't understand how badly this person has hurt me. How can I just forgive them? That's too much to ask.

Remember how we said that sin creates relational debt? When you forgive, you are paying the debt created by another. Forgiveness costs something. In our minds, forgiveness seems unfair and unjust and it hurts. But the LORD wants us to be merciful.

**Luke 6:36-37**  “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

1. **The Cross**

The cross was a display of Jesus' relational generosity. We have all sinned against God and therefore broken our relationship and created a debt that must be paid.

Relational Generosity of God

**John 3:16-17**  **“**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

Jesus paid our relational debt and now through faith in him, we are forgiven and our relationship with God has been restored.

**\*Explanation of the Trinity\***

Jesus is as much God as the Father and the Spirit are God. One God existing in Three roles

Therefore, The Father not only experienced the execution of his one and only begotten Son, But he also bore the consequences of our sin on the cross. The cross was the payment for our relational debt. God did not have to forgive us. But he loved us enough to serve us in the payment of our debt.

**Matthew 20:28 “**just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The cross was a display of God’s great mercy, love and grace.

Therefore, forgive each other as you have been forgiven.