

Matthew 25 Five Levels of Connection

A Basic Framework to Understand How Relationships Progress

Deep relationships typically follow a recognizable progression. Not all relationships will deepen over time (we wouldn't have capacity for that) but the ones that do usually progress through five stages.

Each level of connection is important. As humans, we need both friendly greetings from strangers and deep conversations with close friends. Most acquaintances will never turn into good friends or reliable work partners. But we don't usually get to those deeper levels without first building trust by progressing through each phase of development.

The Five Levels of Connections, with Brief Descriptions:

1. First Impression

- Vibe
- Feeling
- Look
- Body language

2. Small Talk

- Easy intros/questions
- Basic information
- Entry points/on ramps to deeper connection

3. Invitations

- Small ask: chat, coffee, lunch, come to a low-commitment event
- Use prior knowledge of that person: "I remember you said..."
- Goal: learn more, deepen connection
- See Matthew 25's Five Big Questions resource

4. Relationship

- Familiarity and beginnings of trust
- Established shared interest
- Regular interaction

5. Partnership

- Mutual investment, contribution
- Shared work toward shared goals
- Give and take from both sides
- Show up for each other

How is this useful?

Communities, organizations, and people are stronger if they are well-connected within a web of supportive relationships. But we don't always know how to build or deepen those connections. This framework was created to help us pay attention, create opportunities at each level, and intentionally nurture the relationships we'd like to progress to those deeper levels.