



The Safest Place on Earth: Where People Connect and Are Forever Changed

Larry Crabb , Eugene H. Peterson (Foreword by)

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In today's frenetic society, people rarely develop intimate friendships. Instead, they spend their lives essentially disconnected from others, rushing through life content with brief visits and casual conversations. But what if one were to develop a community, a spiritual community, of people who walked with and supported each other through life's journey? A community of real friends who listened to each other's personal tragedies without merely trying to fix the problems, who encouraged and nurtured each other's strengths, and who accepted people for who they really are, instead of the image they try to portray. In "The Safest Place on Earth," Larry Crabb explores such a place, where God can heal disconnected people and allow them to reconnect with each other and, ultimately, with Him.

The Safest Place on Earth: Where People Connect and Are Forever Changed Details

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Amanda says

I really like the premise of turning our chairs to face one another and that spiritual community cannot be forced or managed, it must come through the Holy Spirit. Some of the mystical stuff got a little fluffy for me, but otherwise it was a good read. Took a little long to read though.

Geoffrey Kerns says

So, so.

Lisa says

Larry Crabb's books bring out the squirm in me -- and that's good! The book is written for the church. It's a shouting call for authentic spiritual Christ community. There is little affirmation for the church that plays to consumers or seekers felt-needs. He defies milk-toast communities where the goal is to relieve people's pain superficially by tickling ears with what feels good (2 Timothy 2.3,4) or offering some kind of buffet in which people can 'decide' what they want. But, in typical Crabb style, after being the prophet crying in the wilderness he presents cures for a church community, what he calls the "safest place on earth." The church becomes an inviting place for messy people [of which I am the most!:]. Growing. Thriving. Truth-telling and truth-living. Liberty through real repentance and forgiveness. And all in the name of Jesus and His enduring love for his church! Here's one of my top quotes: "A central task of community is to create a place that is safe enough for the walls to be torn down, safe enough for each of us to own and reveal our brokenness. Only then can community be used of God to restore our souls."

Kev says

There is a place where many in society have overdosed on chemical responses to stress and trauma. There are viable options available in many local communities. Many of these options are found in the local church, temple, synagogue or mosque. Larry reminds us of where we can find or build these resources That way the professional healers can focus on clinical dimensions and where local lay healing can be provided through true fellowship.

Erin says

While there were some points that prompted good reading and discussion (the differing rooms)I am not a big fan of Crabb's writing style or his philosophy of counseling. However, when I read Crabb I do gain insight from someone in the field that gives me a larger perspective.

Tamara says

This such an eye-opening book. I find the depth of thought about the importance of true acceptance of friends, community & self is enlightening. I am only on Chapter 4 and have learned SO many good life skills to use in my future! :)

Linda Carmel says

I was asked by my church to write up a authors profile on Larry Crabb. As I researched online and read about him, it was like visiting an old friend. I sure enjoyed his books at one point in my life. So much that I havent parted with them and I am not even a book collector. Once I am done with a book I pass it on. I've decided to reread the books of his that I've kept - this is one of the ones I'll be rereading.

Christina says

I don't agree with everything he says, but I do with 90% of it emphatically agree! I read this at the time I was just really working through the role of the Spirit in the lives of Christians, and how we develop spiritual community, how we share what the Spirit is doing in us when the church often doesn't really do well in providing a safe place for that. So it felt like he was writing the book to me and I often wanted to shout, "Yes! This is it!" Unfortunately it felt like the GREAT stuff that the book was about could've been said in 5 chapters instead of 17. Chapter 16 is the heart of the book, the rest of it is good if you haven't already seen the soul-less way we often relate to each other in church. He does a lot of groundwork to show WHY what he's encouraging is important, and what discourages us from it. Great book still. His first book I read that was also a life-shaper was "The Pressure's Off: breaking free from rules and performance." Fantastic book for those of us who are still desperately trying to "make life work." I wanted more of his thoughts after that book, this is the next one I read.

Mark-robyn says

A great call to individual believers and the church to live at God's intended level of intimacy with one another and living out the reality that God has made us into new creations. Who we are at our core is holy.

Shaun Carraway says

Truly the ideal of not only what church should be, but the interaction of anyone claiming to be a Christian with anyone. Things will never be this way on our own efforts: we seek perfection and hide all blemishes.

Sharon Bollenbacher says

The message of Christian community is very good. The reading by Dr. Crabb of his book didn't draw my attention as well. I think I would have enjoyed this more if I had read it instead of listening to it.

Stephen Carpenter says

A challenging book on what the church should be. I say challenging because we are called to be a spiritual community and what it takes to accomplish that can be quite frightening. A great book but definitely can't just skim through.

Richard says

Beyond the evangelical zeal is an image of how people can relate to one another in a way that nurtures and affirms life. If only...

leah says

good so far!

Michael Culbertson says

Larry Crabb's *Safest Place On Earth* (recently republished under the title *Becoming a True Spiritual Community*) extends the basic ideas he presented in his earlier work *Connecting*. *Safest Place* can be read independently of *Connecting*, and, in my view, is organized more clearly. As Eugene Peterson mentions in the forward, Crabb "invites us into an extended, leisurely conversation on the emphatically personal and inter-personal nature of all human life, sharply focused in the trinitarian revelation of this life in Jesus" (vii), identifying how residual effects of the old sinful nature contribute to disconnection and how the new nature Christians receive in Christ can be used to foster genuine community.

Crabb talks about these two natures as two rooms in our hearts---the Lower Room of the old nature and the Upper Room of the new. When we inhabit our Lower Room: we long for good relationships; we look after our own needs; we learn what we like and don't like about the world and seek/avoid what pleases/displeases us; and we are aware of a moral code that tells us what we should or should not do in our pursuit of happiness (64). The corruption due to the Fall fills us with unholy passions: a passion for self over others, a passion for control over reliance on God, a passion to define life (pleasures to reexperience) and death (pain to avoid) in our own terms, and a passion to perform (87).

But, the good news of the gospel is that by trusting in Jesus as Lord, we have received a new nature, an Upper Room, in which these unholy passions are traded for holy passions. In this new nature: we are given a new purity, cleansed from sin, which stirs a passion to worship God instead of self; we are given a new

identity as child (not enemy) of God, which stirs a passion to trust God instead of self; we are given a new disposition toward doing good, which stirs a passion to grow in godliness; and we are given a new power to achieve these things (that of the Holy Spirit), which stirs a passion to obey (168-9). This new nature is ours in Christ, even though the old nature has not been completely expelled. Inhabiting this Upper Room requires the continual process of putting off the old nature (mortifying the flesh) and living more fully the new nature (vivifying the spirit).

Moreover, the four holy passions of the new nature form a framework for fostering connection with others in spiritual community. Just as I have a new purity in Christ, so too my Christian brother or sister has a new purity in Christ, which I can celebrate in acceptance. Just as I have a new identity in Christ, so too my Christian brother has a new identity as saint, not sinner, which I can envision him taking on more fully. Just as I have a new disposition to do good, I can discern between good and bad passions in my Christian brother or sister. And, since I have the power of Christ in me, I can pour out of that power into you.

With this anthropological framework in place, Crabb indicates that developing spiritual community requires three foundational convictions: 1) Forming spiritual community is the Spirit's work, not ours; 2) we best promote another's holiness by pursuing our own; and 3) every bad desire is a corruption of a good desire, and every good desire is a meager expression of our deepest desire---to know God (125). Community must consequently be a safe place to explore our desires and trace them to their source in a hunger for God.

Then, the process Crabb suggests for fostering community with others is to enter their lives (accepting them on account of their new identity, despite the residual bad), see both the good and the bad in their lives (believing in their power to shed the bad in favor of the good due to their new nature in Christ), and touch them with the power of Christ (169-170). Crabb insists that though we see the bad, we ought not try to fix it, search for its roots, or work through it, as might be typical in a counseling paradigm. Rather, we recognize it for what it is, and cast it off, opting instead to focus on and intensify the new nature in Christ. The touch of the power of Christ comes through being attentive to the word or act the Spirit prompts:

Spiritual friends listen to God, they listen to what He is stirring in their own hearts as they engage with us. ... It may be a rebuke, a piece of homey advice, even a joke that occurs to them. It may be a thought from Scripture or a memory from their past they want to share. It's rarely clever, it rarely generates admiration of the messenger's brilliance, though it may create a longing to be similarly sensitive to God's Spirit. (173-4)

And, since the work is, in the end, the Spirit's, the person giving the touch doesn't have to worry about whether what he or she says is "good enough":

When spiritual friends share their stories, the others listen without working. They rest. There's nothing to fix, nothing to improve. A spiritual community feels undisturbed quiet as they listen, certainly burdened, sometimes to the point of anguish for what others must endure, but still resting in the knowledge that the life within, the passion for holiness, is indestructible. It needs only to be nourished and released. (139)

Finally, Crabb emphasizes that since community is a work of the Spirit, it cannot be managed or programmed into existence. Rather, the first and most important step for those who earnestly desire spiritual community is fervent prayer.

Larry Crabb has opened for me a new perspective on relating to others. God has given me an analytical mind and a desire to resolve problems in the world. Both of these are valuable gifts and have their due place, but in

many instances, friends don't need someone to fix their problems---they need someone to draw them nearer to Jesus.
