

# CONNECT

SMALL GROUP SERIES

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

FELLOWSHIP ALLIANCE CHAPEL



# SPECIAL THANKS

The work put into producing this small group series is due to the collaborative efforts of our spectacular volunteers that serve at Fellowship Alliance Chapel and its staff. Special thanks to Josh and Danielle Street for video production and design of the Guide, Ellen Bates, Matt Miller, and Debbie Stevenson in brainstorming the sessions and sections of the Guide, FAC administrative assistants for all their help, and all of the FAC staff for their contribution.

**CONNECT**

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# INTRODUCTION

At Fellowship Alliance Chapel, we want to help you hear God's call and follow it. God speaks and He calls each of us personally, not to a religion of rules or guidelines, but to an actual living relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. Jesus came, lived, died, and rose again so that you and I could know the Father through Him.

But He calls each of us to experience this living relationship with Him in the context of one another, the church. Together, in real relationships with one another, we should be following God's call.

In the course of this series, our desire is to allow you to see and hear what God wants to do in you and through you as you experience true fellowship with one another and examine what it means to be following God's call. In ten sessions you will explore with your group what it means to be following God's call by looking through three specific relationships, or "connections":



CONNECTING TO GOD



CONNECTING TO  
GOD'S PEOPLE



CONNECTING TO  
GOD'S WORK

## WHAT CAN I EXPECT IN A SMALL GROUP?

The way Jesus changes us is in the context of true fellowship with Him and one another. During your time together, you will explore what it means to be following God's call by looking at the three connections: Connecting to God, God's People, and God's Work. You'll also have time to get to know each other's stories, pray for one another, and watch God work among you. And believe it or not, this will be fun! By the end of your time together you will know each other a lot better than you do now.

In order for you to get the most out of this series with your group, whether it's a miniChurch or Plug-in Small Group, we're asking you to do three things:

### SHOW UP

You'll need to **show up**. It sounds obvious, but it's worth saying. In order for you to connect as a group, you need to spend time with one another. And that starts by showing up for the group meeting time.

### JOIN IN

You'll need to **join in**. This means that you need to join in and participate in the discussion and when the guide asks you to spend time during the week in reflection.

### BE REAL

You'll need to **be real**. These groups are a safe environment of grace. No one is perfect. Be who you really are.

If you can commit to these things, there is no telling how God is going to speak to you and use you in the lives of others in your group.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Each of the ten sessions within this Guide follows the same format. Suggested time markers are provided within each of the sessions as well.

**Review** – Before introducing the new session, 1-2 participants from the group briefly share their experiences of applying the previous week’s lesson.

**Pray** – Each new session begins with an opening prayer for the group. (5 min.)

**Reflect** – A question for reflection and group discussion is provided. (5 min.)

**Discover** – Group members are invited to read the main Scripture passage aloud and then engage with specific questions that address the selected passage(s). (15 min.)

**Watch** – A pastoral teaching video is provided for group members to view. (15 min.)

**Discuss** – Following the Scripture lesson and video teaching, group members will have an opportunity to go deeper into discussing the content and teaching. (20 min.)

**Apply** – Participants are given an opportunity to apply the teaching and consider how it practically applies to their lives. (5 min.)

**Take Action** – A question is offered for participants to reflect on and to continue thinking about during their week. (5 min.)

**Pray** – The small group session will be closed in prayer. Suggestions or special instructions will be offered for consideration in the Guide as well. (5-10 min.)

**Following Through** – Using the “Apply” and “Take Action” sections of each lesson as a guide, you can fill out a new goal for each month of 2015 through October. This can serve as a Guide for you to grow in your relationship with Christ over the next year.

**CONNECT TO  
GOD** 

# SESSION 1 FOLLOW



**BIG IDEA** – Jesus invites us to follow Him above all else and experience transformation and eternal purpose.



**SCRIPTURE** – Matthew 4:18-20

## INTRODUCTION

Over the course of a lifetime we will receive countless invitations. Many of these invitations call us into relationships – an invitation for a cup of coffee, a birthday celebration, a friendship, or a marriage. Sometimes accepting the invitation is minor, like taking a walk with a friend. But other times accepting the invitation can change the entire course of our lives.

Jesus extends the ultimate life-changing invitation to every person with just two little words...“Follow Me.” Two thousand years ago this call rang out to a few common fishermen who left everything to follow Jesus. This same call still goes out to us today. We can follow Jesus with every aspect of our lives just as the early disciples did. In fact, we not only can, we must if we are to experience the abundant life that Jesus promises (John 10:10).

In this session we will explore what Jesus means when He says, “Follow Me,” along with the life changes we can expect from accepting the most important invitation we will ever receive.

## PRAY

Begin each session with prayer for the group. Today, thank the Lord for bringing you together to learn more about Him and each other. Invite God to be present and to prepare your minds and hearts to hear His voice and be receptive to His call to follow.

## REFLECT (5 MINUTES)

What images, words, or phrases come to mind when you think of a “good Christian?”

## DISCOVER (15 MINUTES)

Many people believe that to be a Christian you need to pray a prayer, attend church on Sunday, and get on with life as usual until it is time to go to heaven. This was never God’s design. Answer the following questions to discover what Jesus intends for us as His followers.

- 1) Read Luke 9:23 and answer the following questions.
- a. What three things does Jesus require of a Christian?

- i. \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. \_\_\_\_\_

- b. What would the phrase, “take up his cross” mean for a person in that time period? What do you think that means for us today?

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- 2) Look up the following verses and identify the blessings associated with following Jesus.

- a. Mark 1:17 \_\_\_\_\_
- b. John 8:12 \_\_\_\_\_
- c. John 10:27-28 \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Acts 4:13 \_\_\_\_\_

- 3) As a group, summarize what Jesus’ expectations and promises are for a follower of Christ.



.....  
Early followers of Jesus were called “disciples,” not “Christians.”  
A disciple is a learner or student. He or she seeks to follow  
Jesus in every aspect of life. This title still applies to us today. It  
is not just meant for “super-Christians.” If you are a follower of  
Christ, you are His disciple.  
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## WATCH (10 MINUTES)

Pastor Don is going to share insights into what following Jesus means for us today. Let’s listen as he recounts his discovery of following Jesus and the fruit we can expect from making that same commitment in our own lives.

## DISCUSS (20 MINUTES)

- 1) What is the difference between following Jesus and following the rules? What is your “net” that you need to leave behind in order to follow Jesus more fully?
- 2) Jesus said, “Follow Me, and I will make you...” This statement indicates a transformation process. What changes have you seen (or would like to see) in your life that support this promise?
- 3) The final phrase of Jesus’ invitation is one of purpose. Jesus says, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” He invites us into His work. Share with the group one person who has been instrumental in your walk with God. What did they do? What can you do (or what do you do) to be a fisher of men?
- 4) How has your view of a “good Christian” been challenged or supported since the beginning of this session?

## APPLY (5 MINUTES)

Put yourself in Peter's position and imagine that Jesus has called you to follow Him (because He has!). Use the space below to journal a response to Jesus. Express your feelings and intentions in regard to following Him. Include any questions or hesitations you may have. Be honest.

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## TAKE ACTION (5 MINUTES)

This week, intentionally choose to do something that reflects your commitment to following Jesus (not in a legalistic sense, but out of love and obedience). Remember, this is a relationship. It may help to think of a significant relationship you have in your life and consider what you do to express your love to that person. Below is a chart with some examples to help you get started.

### RELATIONSHIP BUILDERS

If you like to...	Then choose to...
Talk with a friend	Pray regularly
Listen to a friend's stories	Read the Bible
Do something special to make them feel loved	Serve someone expecting nothing in return
Encourage your friend	Share your testimony with a non-believer
Say you are sorry if you hurt your friend	Confess and ask for forgiveness

What will you choose to show Jesus that you value your relationship with Him? Write your response below.

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## PRAY

Close your time in prayer asking the Lord to reveal Himself to each group member in a personal way. Pray that you would each grasp the commitment and blessing involved in following Jesus. Thank Him for the amazing privilege we have in accepting this life-changing invitation.

## FOR NEXT WEEK...

Our focus on "Connecting to God" will continue as we consider the importance of having conversations with Him.



Turn to the back of your Guide and fill out the section entitled, "Following Through."

# SESSION 2 CONVERSATIONS



**BIG IDEA** – We need to stay connected to God through conversations with God.



**SCRIPTURE** – 1 Kings 19:9-13

## REVIEW

Choose one or two people to explain how they chose to reflect their commitment to follow Jesus. What did following through with your intentions look like? What have you learned from this?

## INTRODUCTION

In our last session we were challenged to take an honest look at our current response to Jesus' invitation to follow Him. It is important to remember that when we follow Jesus we are following a person as opposed to a set of rules. As we follow Jesus, He changes us more and more into His likeness and develops within us a heart to join Him in His work to reach the lost.

This transforming process occurs as we spend time with God and allow Him to mold our thoughts, attitudes, and desires to conform to His own. Unfortunately, this is not always a priority in our lives. Our days are busy and we tend to measure our productiveness by how much we accomplish. Spending time with God may be considered a luxury for those who have fewer responsibilities or need less sleep.

But if we are to have a growing, thriving relationship with the Lord, we need to understand the significance of spending time with Him and reorganize our lives to reflect that understanding. Time is necessary for any relationship to deepen and our relationship with Jesus is no exception.

In this session we will take time to consider the value and practice of connecting to God through personal and meaningful conversation.

# PRAY

Begin this session with prayer for the group. Thank God for the blessing it is to be able to come to Him in prayer. Ask the Lord to meet each person where they are and to deepen their desire to spend time with Him.

## REFLECT (5 MINUTES)

Take a few minutes to reflect on this quote:

“Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?”

*Corrie ten Boom*

How would you answer this question?

## DISCOVER (15 MINUTES)

**1)** People who follow Jesus seek to do what Jesus did. Look up the following verses in the Gospels that give us a glimpse into His prayer life. What can you learn about prayer from Jesus?

- a. Matthew 14:19-20 \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Matthew 14:23 \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Matthew 19:13 \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Mark 1:35 \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Mark 14:32-39 \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Luke 6:12-13 \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Luke 22:31-32 \_\_\_\_\_

**2)** Jesus explains the importance of staying connected to God in John 15. Read John 15:4-8.

- a. What are the differences between a person who stays closely connected to God and one who does not?
- b. What do you think Jesus means by the word “nothing?” (verse 5)

## WATCH (10 MINUTES)

Connecting to God through prayer is a commitment. Let's listen as Pastor Don shares important insights into a prayer life that can equip us for our days and expand our experience of God.

## DISCUSS (20 MINUTES)

- 1) Imagine you are sitting down to spend some time with God. You have your Bible and a cup of coffee. As you are about to get started you look up and God Himself is taking a seat next to you. What would you say? What would you want to talk with Him about?
- 2) What helps you have a good conversation with God? What difficulties do you encounter?
- 3) If you could change something about your prayer life, what would it be?
- 4) How could your life be impacted if you had a prayer life like the one that Jesus modeled for us?

## APPLY (5 MINUTES)

Take a few minutes to make a prayer list. Write down some of the things that you would like to talk to God about. For example, are you thankful for something? Are you struggling with something? Do you need guidance? Refer back to question #1 in the "Discuss" section to get you started.

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## TAKE ACTION (5 MINUTES)

This week, set aside intentional time each day to have a conversation with God and pray through the prayer list you just created. Make a realistic goal and write out your intentions below. For example, "I commit to spending 5-10 minutes each morning in conversation with God."

## PRAY

Close your time thanking the Lord for the gift He has given us to communicate with Him through prayer. Pray that each person would be faithful in carving out some time each day to spend time with Him. Pray that through these sacred conversations we would experience His presence and be changed.

## FOR NEXT WEEK...

We will begin looking at "Connecting to God's People" and see the importance that Christian community has in supporting healthy and necessary change in our lives.



Turn to the back of your Guide and fill out the section entitled, "Following Through."

# CONNECT TO GOD'S PEOPLE



# SESSION 3 CHANGE



**BIG IDEA** – God uses Christian community to bring about necessary change in our lives.



**SCRIPTURE** – Ephesians 4:11-24

## REVIEW

Choose one or two people to share their experiences of having conversations with God. Were you able to keep your commitment? What was the result? What will you continue doing or do differently going forward?

## INTRODUCTION

Last week we discussed the importance of spending time with God. One of the benefits of spending time with Him is that He does not leave you as you are. It is impossible to spend meaningful time with Him and stay the same. Having a relationship with God will always involve change.

Change is not a new concept for anyone. In fact, change is a part of life for all of us. Some changes are welcome, and some we would rather not have to go through, but change is a fact of life we cannot ignore. We experience physical changes as we age and emotional changes as we live, love, and hurt. Families change, friends change, responsibilities change, and circumstances change. The list could go on and on.

Spiritually, the same is true. God desires to see our hearts change from stone to flesh and our souls change from death to life. Therefore, one of the greatest changes we will ever experience occurs when we submit our lives to Christ and receive His forgiveness. As immediate as this change is, it

is just the beginning of an amazing journey towards Christ-likeness that will last into eternity. This road to spiritual maturity is not meant to be traveled alone. The Lord has blessed us with each other to share this journey and encourage us along the way.

In this session we shift our focus from “Connecting to God” to “Connecting to God’s People.” We will explore the role of Christian community in paving the way for transformation in our lives.

## PRAY

Begin this session with prayer for the group. Thank the Lord for the community that He is building within your group. Pray that the Lord would be present and that He would lead you to a greater understanding of His promise of transformation through sharing life together.

## REFLECT (5 MINUTES)

The word “change” can invoke an array of different feelings and reactions. What comes to mind when you contemplate change occurring in your own life?

## DISCOVER (15 MINUTES)

**1)** Many people choose Christ based on the promise of eternal life but may remain unaware of the changes meant to take place while still here on earth. Read Ephesians 4:20-24.

a. What are we commanded to “put off?”

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b. Where are we to be “renewed” or “made new?”

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c. What are we to “put on?”

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2) Read Galatians 5:19-26 and contrast the clear examples of the “old self” and the “new self.”

Notice that the majority of the “old self” and “new self” practices cannot happen in isolation. They are actions involving God or other people that arise from attitudes of the heart. It is through people that we wound and are wounded and through people that we heal and are healed.

3) According to Galatians 5:24-25, what are we expected to do as followers of Christ?

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4) Return to Ephesians and read chapter 4:11-16 for God’s plan to bring about the changes from our “old self” to our “new self.” This change is reflected as a maturity process.

a. What word is used to describe believers in verse 14?

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b. What are we to become according to verse 13?

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## WATCH (10 MINUTES)

Let’s listen as Pastor Dave teaches how God uses community to bring about this necessary change in our lives.



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Community is essentially a group of people...that have a particular characteristic in common, e.g., school community, business community, etc. In Christian community, our common bond is Jesus Christ. Our shared faith in Him transcends all boundaries such as social or economic status, race, background, etc.  
.....

## DISCUSS (20 MINUTES)

- 1) Why do you think community is necessary in supporting change?
- 2) Pastor Dave described healthy Christian community as communities of truth, repentance, and grace. Have you ever experienced this kind of community? Which of the three qualities do you need the most to help you move in a positive direction towards change?
- 3) Truth, repentance, and grace require group members to be honest with each other and to overcome superficiality in relationships. This means people need to be transparent with one another and give each other permission to be held accountable. This requires humility and is not an easy thing to do. What do you need to feel safe enough to be transparent and trust others with your heart?
- 4) Brainstorm guidelines that you can agree upon to govern your small group that allows for a level of intimacy and encourages and supports transformation into the likeness of Christ. Consider areas such as confidentiality, commitment to the group, giving advice, etc. If you are an established group that has talked about this in the past, this is a good time to reaffirm your group guidelines.
- 5) What area of your life or "old self" practice is God calling you to change? If you are willing, share it with the group. How can this group hold you accountable in the transformation process?

## APPLY (5 MINUTES)

Choose one of the following three areas and determine an action step that will position yourself for change and/or allow you to be more actively engaged in a community of change:

- 1) Do you need to become more knowledgeable or mindful in regard to God's truth?
- 2) Do you need to confess to someone and repent?
- 3) Do you need to stop judging others and instead show love and grace?

## TAKE ACTION (5 MINUTES)

Transformation happens in a community of healthy relationships. Build up relationships in your group through these two action steps:

- 1)** Make an intentional phone call to get to know someone in your group. Have each person write their name and phone number on a piece of paper and collect them. Then have each person draw a name (men draw a man's name and women draw a woman's name). Call the person whose name you drew sometime this week to get to know them better and for them to get to know you. If you need a conversation starter, consider asking a question that is open-ended. For example, ask them to tell you about their family, their hobbies or interests, or how they spend their days. Find out if they have any prayer requests and commit to praying for that person. When you get together the next time, you will have a more meaningful understanding of two people in your group (the person you called and the person who called you).
- 2)** Commit to participate in your small group in a meaningful way that seeks transformation into the likeness of Christ. This can be done through a verbal commitment or a written agreement, but must be followed through with regular attendance and participation in the group.

## PRAY

Close your time in prayer asking the Lord to strengthen the group in unity, love, and forgiveness. Pray that each person would be open to change and to being there for each other. Pray for any specific issues that may have come up during the course of the session.

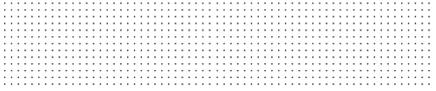
## FOR NEXT WEEK...

We will consider Jesus' model of love and how we can extend a Christ-like love to each other as we continue to explore "Connecting to God's People."



Turn to the back of your Guide and fill out the section entitled, "Following Through."

# SESSION 4 LOVE



**BIG IDEA** – We are to love one another as Jesus has loved us.



**SCRIPTURE** – John 15:12

## REVIEW

Choose one person to share their experience of calling a group member and one person to share their experience of receiving the phone call (not necessarily the same pair). What was it like? What did you learn?

## INTRODUCTION

In our last session together, we saw the value of Christian community as a conduit for change in our lives. In addition to His Word and His Spirit, God often speaks through His people to teach us, challenge us, encourage us, and move us toward growth in Christ. But growth requires more than just a good discussion, or a well placed word of warning or encouragement. Real change requires a particular environment in which to thrive – and that environment is love.

We can be communities of truth, repentance, and grace, but if we do not nurture love we will come across as resounding gongs or clanging cymbals that offer nothing and gain nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). But in an atmosphere of love, the truth, repentance, and grace we extend to one another can result in lasting change and connections that ultimately reflect Jesus to the world.

In this session, we will examine Jesus' model of love and consider how we can extend a Christ-like love to each other.

## PRAY

In your opening prayer, thank the Lord for loving us so much that He came and walked among us, giving us an example of how to love each other. Pray that the Lord would be present and that He would give each person a greater understanding of true, Christ-like love and the capacity to share it.

## REFLECT (5 MINUTES)

People give and receive love in a variety of ways. Some examples (commonly referred to as the five love languages) are listed below. When you consider this list, how do you tend to express your love for someone?

- 1) Words of Affirmation – “You look really nice today!”
- 2) Acts of Service – “I filled up the gas tank for you.”
- 3) Gifts – “I thought of you when I saw these funny socks...I just had to get them for you.”
- 4) Quality Time – “I would love to spend the afternoon together.”
- 5) Physical Touch – “Can I give you a hug?”

## DISCOVER (15 MINUTES)

The twelve disciples were Jesus’ small group. He spent time with them, taught them, and loved them for approximately three years before His death and resurrection. Read the account of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples in John 13:1-17 and answer the following questions.

- 1) Verse 1 describes the symbolic nature of this act of Jesus. What does washing the disciples’ feet demonstrate?

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2) What are we supposed to learn from this encounter?

(See verses 14-17)

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3) What does Jesus mean when He says we are to do as He has done? (John 13:15) Are we supposed to spend time literally washing each other's feet? Maybe, but the meaning is much deeper than that. When you contemplate answers to the following questions, keep in mind who Jesus is.

a) What character traits does Jesus demonstrate in this encounter (e.g., humility)? If it helps, put yourself in the place of one of the disciples and imagine what it would be like for God Himself to wash your feet.

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b) Jesus knew that Judas was going to betray Him, yet He washed his feet, too. What can you learn from Jesus' inclusion of Judas in showing love to others?

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c) What can you learn from Peter and His reactions to Jesus' display of love? (John 13:6-9)

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d) Summarize your answers from a, b, and c into a few sentences to answer the question asked in #3 - "What does Jesus mean when He says we are to do as He has done?"

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Foot washing was a common practice in Jesus' time due to traveling on dusty roads with open sandals. Typically, the host would arrange for a slave to wash the feet of his guests as a courtesy.  
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## WATCH (10 MINUTES)

There is so much that we can learn from Jesus about what it means to love one another. Let's listen as Pastor Dave talks about how we can love like Jesus in our own small group.

## DISCUSS (15 MINUTES)

- 1) Pastor Dave identified three ways we can demonstrate love – by serving others (sacrifice), by sharing life and truth with others, and by bridging the gap for others by embracing them despite differences. In what ways does this description of love make you feel uncomfortable or motivated?
- 2) Discuss the responsibility of showing love within a small group.
  - a) Who is responsible?
  - b) What conditions give love the best chance to thrive when carrying out the command to love one another as Jesus has loved us (e.g., respect)?



.....  
This is not meant to imply that love is "conditional." It is intended to help each person become aware of their role in loving the others in the group.  
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- 3) Share with the group what makes you feel loved (e.g., random texts or phone call, cards, etc.). If it is helpful, refer back to the list of five love languages in the "Reflect" section.



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Listen to each group member (take notes if you want) and seek out future opportunities to show love to each other.  
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## APPLY (15 MINUTES)

Application for this session will be during the time of prayer at the end of your time together. Review "Take Action" before you move onto prayer so that each prayer group can close out the session at their own pace.

## TAKE ACTION (5 MINUTES)

This week memorize John 15:12.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

~ *John 15:12 ESV*

## PRAY

Break into two groups; men in one group and women in another. Share a personal prayer request about yourself with the group. As time permits, pray for each other's requests and pray that each person would grow in their understanding and capacity to love others as Jesus has loved us. Commit to praying for each other over the course of the week.

## FOR NEXT WEEK...

We will look at early Christian communities and discover how "Connecting to God's People" can have a profound influence on the people around us (in our schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, etc.).



Turn to the back of your Guide and fill out the section entitled, "Following Through."

# SESSION 5 WITNESS



**BIG IDEA** – When God’s people connect, they can make an impact for the kingdom of God through their witness.



**SCRIPTURE** – Acts 2:42-47

## REVIEW

Choose one of two people to recite the memory verse from last week – John 15:12. Have you noticed a difference in the way you seek to love others since the previous session?

## INTRODUCTION

Last week we took a closer look at the emphasis that Jesus placed on showing love towards one another. Jesus clearly embodied love to His disciples and He instructed His followers to love others as He loved us. When we follow this command to love one another, we nurture an environment of transformation and people feel cared for in significant ways.

This kind of love is not meant to stay within the borders of God’s spiritual family. When we love each other as Jesus has loved us, people around us take notice. It looks different from the way the world loves. It piques curiosity and invites people to take a closer look. Our love for one another becomes a witness to all people of the power, grace, and mercy of God.

In this session we will investigate the impact that our love for each other can have, drawing the people around us into the kingdom of God.

# PRAY

In your opening prayer, thank the Lord for your group and pray that He would give each person an eternal perspective regarding their responsibility to reflect the love of God to those in the group and to those on the outside looking in.

# REFLECT (5 MINUTES)

Whether your group has been together for five weeks or five years, what is your motivation for being a part of this group?

# DISCOVER (15 MINUTES)

God created us with a need for community. Regardless of your primary motivation for joining your group, chances are you are hoping for a sense of belonging. You are not alone because this is a God-given desire. All people are looking to belong. Read the selected passages below and answer the following questions that highlight the ripple effect that connecting with God’s people can have on the world.

**1)** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (a small group) brought the Gospel to the city of Thessalonica. Read Paul’s description of their interactions with the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 2:5-12. What are some of the phrases that Paul uses to describe the way they related to the people in the city?

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.....  
When observing Scripture, it is most accurate to use similar words that the author uses. For example, in answering this question say, “Did not use words of flattery,” instead of “It seems like they did their best to stick to the truth and not embellish.”  
.....

- 2) Read the results of the efforts of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy in 1 Thessalonians 2:13-14 (ESV) and fill in the blanks.

*“And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you \_\_\_\_\_ it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. For you, brothers, became \_\_\_\_\_ of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea.”*

- 3) Read 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10. What was the guiding principle that the Thessalonians learned, imitated, and used to govern their conduct? (Notice this principle is in action in the phrases you listed for question #1.)

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- 4) Paul summarizes his experiences with the Thessalonians in the beginning of his letter. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10 and identify the following:

a) What did the Thessalonians become? (verse 7)

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b) What did their example accomplish? (verse 8)

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## **WATCH (10 MINUTES)**

It is clear in God’s Word that conducting ourselves in brotherly love can have a tremendous impact for the kingdom of God. Let’s explore this further as we listen to Pastor Dave teach us about the practices of an early church community and the influence they had on the unbelievers around them.

## DISCUSS (15 MINUTES)

- 1) Pastor Dave described the early Christian community found in Acts 2:42-47. In what ways was that community a witness for Christ?
- 2) What do you personally find attractive about that early community? What makes you uncomfortable? Why?
- 3) How could a contemporary small group become imitators of this early church of God, showing brotherly love towards one another?

## APPLY (5 MINUTES)

Choose one idea from Question 3 that your group agrees upon and discuss how you can live that out together. Summarize your intentions in a sentence or two.

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## TAKE ACTION (5 MINUTES)

This week, tell someone (either a non-believer or someone not involved in an intentional Christian group) about your group and share the blessings that you are experiencing. Do not have any agenda other than to share what God is doing in your life through the group. See if they ask you any questions. You may find you have an opportunity to invite someone to church.

# PRAY

As time permits, spend your prayer time as you did last week. Break into two groups; men in one group and women in another. Share a personal prayer request about yourself and pray for each other.

Alternatively, the leader can lead the group in a time of open prayer. As you close, ask the Lord to continue to unite your group in love and devotion to one another, and that your community would be a witness for Jesus Christ.



.....  
Although praying for co-workers and neighbors has value, your primary prayer request should be about YOU. It is not selfish to ask for prayer for yourself. It gives the people in your group a chance to know you better and love you through interceding on your behalf.  
.....

## FOR NEXT WEEK...

We will look at early Christian communities and discover how “Connecting to God’s People” can have a profound influence on the people around us (in our schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, etc.).



Turn to the back of your Guide and fill out the section entitled, “Following Through.”

# SESSION 6 HOPE



**BIG IDEA** – Christian community nurtures hope in our lives, not just for a season, but for a lifetime.



**SCRIPTURE** – Hebrews 10:23-25

## REVIEW

Choose one or two people to talk about their experiences with telling someone about this group. What did you say? How did the person respond? Do you foresee opportunities for further spiritual conversations?

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past three weeks we have been discussing the importance of connecting to God’s people for change, love, and witness. As we intentionally pursue Jesus in community we experience transformation in our lives. This transformation enlarges our hearts and enables us to love others as Jesus has loved us. Love like this knows no boundaries and causes people to take notice. People are drawn into the family of God and more connections are made.

These vital connections to God’s people are meant to last much longer than a period of time or a season of life. Transformation, love, and witness are lifetime pursuits that require the company and accountability of others to achieve. Together, we can support each other and provide hope for the journey.

In this session, we will explore the variety of ways that Christian community nurtures hope in our lives from here to eternity.

## PRAY

Open your time together with prayer and thank the Lord for the relationships that are developing. Pray for an understanding of the material and that everyone would be united in heart and mind under God's will for your group.

## REFLECT (5 MINUTES)

God has wired us for connection with others. What benefits have you received from friendships in your life?

## DISCOVER (15 MINUTES)

**1)** Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. List the reasons the author gives as to why "two are better than one."

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**2)** Turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 10, where the author of Hebrews is concluding an explanation of Jesus Christ as the final, perfect sacrifice for sin. Jesus alone allows us to have access to God through His blood. Read Hebrews 10:19-25 and answer the questions below.

a) According to verse 22, what has the blood of Christ done for our hearts and bodies (i.e., lives)?

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b) Even though our hearts and bodies are spiritually cleansed and washed, our present reality is filled with struggles, temptations, and failure. Verses 23 – 25 give very practical instructions on how to bring our present reality closer to the truth of our spiritual reality. Reread Hebrews 10:23-25 and list the recommendations the author makes.

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## WATCH (10 MINUTES)

It is obvious that the author of Hebrews believes that we need each other to live out the truth that Jesus Christ has secured for us at the cost of His life. Let's take some time to listen to Pastor Dave talk about facing our daily struggles together with Jesus' promise of deliverance and provision of hope through a lifetime of community.

## DISCUSS (15 MINUTES)

- 1)** Pastor Dave asked a series of questions at the end of his teaching. What are your answers? Are you ready for a lifetime of change? Are you ready for a lifetime of intentional community with God's people? Why or why not?
- 2)** How has your small group already benefitted you in your spiritual walk? Or, how would you like your small group to specifically support you in your spiritual walk?
- 3)** It is time to dream a little. Share the vision of hope you have for your life with the group. What do you look forward to gaining through a lifetime of community (e.g., wisdom for the journey, encouragement to keep going, etc.).
- 4)** To turn this dream into reality, what sort of commitment(s) does this require of you in your group? What sort of commitment(s) does this require of your group in your life?

## APPLY (5 MINUTES)

There is great encouragement in praying for one another. Share a personal prayer request with the group. Use the space below to keep track of the requests.

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.....  
Once again, this is not a time to ask for prayer for a co-worker or neighbor. It is a time for you to open your heart to your group and receive encouragement through prayer.  
.....

## TAKE ACTION (5 MINUTES)

Praying for one another enables God’s Spirit to build us into a family. This week, make it a priority to pray regularly for the members of your group. Follow through if the Holy Spirit prompts you to encourage a brother or sister in a tangible way.

## PRAY

Pray through the requests that were shared with each other. If some people did not write the requests down, assign someone who did to type up a list and send it out to the group.

## FOR NEXT WEEK...

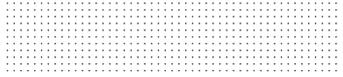
We will turn our attention to “Connecting to God’s Work” and explore our identity in the family of God along with what that means for us as His followers.



Turn to the back of your Guide and fill out the section entitled, “Following Through.”

**CONNECT TO  
GOD'S  
WORK** 

# SESSION 7 IDENTITY



**BIG IDEA** – We belong to the family of God and, as such, we do what our family and our Father does.



**SCRIPTURE** – Romans 8:14-17; Matthew 28:18-20

## REVIEW

Choose one or two people to share their experiences of praying for the members of the group. What happened? Did you encounter any obstacles and were you able to overcome them?

## INTRODUCTION

In our previous session, we learned that Christian community is a key component in perpetuating hope over the course of our lifetimes. We never outgrow our need for encouragement and accountability because the Christian walk is susceptible to struggle, disappointment, and failure. As we share our lives with each other, bonds grow and often people become like family to one another.

Families carry their own identities, and the family of God is no exception. As we spend time with God and each other we may begin to act the same. We may use similar phrases and sometimes even have “inside jokes” that outsiders would not understand. As we grow in our understanding of belonging to the family of God we may also make similar decisions as we align our lives with God’s Word.

In this lesson, as we turn our attention from “Connecting to God’s People” to “Connecting to God’s Work,” we will explore the truth that as disciples of Jesus we belong to His family and, as a result, we participate in what our family and our Father does.

# PRAY

Begin this session with prayer for the group. Pray that the Lord would be present with your group and that He would open up your hearts and minds to understand their identity in Christ and how to live that out.

# REFLECT (5 MINUTES)

Briefly share a few details about the family you grew up in. Were there any activities you liked to do together as a family?

# DISCOVER (15 MINUTES)

**1)** Paul paints a very grim picture of people who are without Christ in their lives in Ephesians 2:12. Look up the reference and fill in the blanks to complete the Scripture verse.

*Ephesians 2:12 ESV:* " remember that you were at that time \_\_\_\_\_  
from Christ, \_\_\_\_\_ from the commonwealth of Israel and  
\_\_\_\_\_ to the covenants of promise,  
having \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in the world.

Rewrite the words that you filled in below.

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**2)** Read Ephesians 2:13. What has the blood of Christ done for us?

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**3)** Paul uses a very different description for people who have Jesus in their lives. Read Ephesians 2:19-22 and fill in the blanks to complete the Scripture verses.

*Ephesians 2:19-22 ESV:* "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are \_\_\_\_\_ with the saints and \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being \_\_\_\_\_ together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being \_\_\_\_\_ into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

Rewrite the words that you filled in below.

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**4)** Compare the two lists of words from Ephesians 2:12 and Ephesians 2:19-22. What are some conclusions you can draw from your observations?

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**5)** Romans 8:14-17 expands on the idea of belonging to the family of God. Read Romans 8:14-17 and identify any word that indicates a family relationship.

## **WATCH (10 MINUTES)**

Let's listen as Pastor Jim talks about our new identity in the family of God and what that means for us as disciples of Jesus Christ.

## DISCUSS (15 MINUTES)

- 1) When we enter into a relationship with Jesus, we are adopted into His family. What personal meaning does that hold for you?
- 2) What are some of the blessings that make you glad to be a part of the family of God?
- 3) What evidence do you see in your life that indicates you have taken on your new identity? What evidence do you see that indicates there are parts that are still wrapped up in your old identity?
- 4) When we live in a family, we take on the habits and mannerisms of our family members. With this in mind, how can you begin living in your new identity today, as one who is "in Christ, living as a missionary servant;" a sent one making disciples?

## APPLY (5 MINUTES)

Consider your answer to question #4 and make it practical. What is one specific step that you are willing to take to live as a "sent one" on mission to make disciples? For example, is there something you need to give up? Or start doing? Is there someone you need to reach out to?

Write out your thoughts below.

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.....  
Please consider your step prayerfully before and throughout.  
This application is not intended to produce pride in an accomplishment, but to humbly look more like the family you belong to.  
.....

## TAKE ACTION (5 MINUTES)

This week, choose something to wear that will remind you of your new identity in Christ (e.g., a piece of jewelry, clothing, or pair of shoes). Wear your chosen item every day. Each time you look at it, remind yourself that you are a child of God and then choose to live in that new identity. Be mindful of the insights you can gain from this exercise. Please participate in this even if you have understood this truth for a long time.

## PRAY

Close your time in prayer for one another. Thank the Lord for adopting us into His family and for giving us a new identity and purpose.

## FOR NEXT WEEK...

We will focus on our responsibility to serve within the family of God as we continue to explore "Connecting to God's Work."



Turn to the back of your Guide and fill out the section entitled, "Following Through."

# SESSION 8 SERVING: YOUR CHURCH



**BIG IDEA** – As members of God’s family, we serve one another because we want to see our family well cared for.



**SCRIPTURE** – Galatians 6:9-10; Acts 6:1-7

## REVIEW

Choose one or two people to share their experiences of wearing a particular item over the course of the week to remind them of their identity as a member of God’s family. What was it like? What insights did you gain from this exercise?

## INTRODUCTION

Last week we began our study of “Connecting to God’s Work” by discovering that as a Christian, or disciple of Jesus, we have a new identity. We are members of God’s family and, as such, we begin to care about what Jesus cares about, and do what our family and our Father does.

One of the important things that our family and our Father does is take care of each other. We live in a society that prizes individuality and self-sufficiency, so taking care of one another may not always be high on our priority list. But if we are to pattern our lives after Jesus we must put others first and that begins with caring for those in our very own “family.”

In this session, we will take a closer look at the why and how of serving your church family.

## PRAY

Begin this session with prayer for the group. Pray that the Holy Spirit would prompt each person to recognize the unique place where they are called and equipped to serve the body of Christ. Pray that the Lord would be present with your group and give you wisdom and understanding.

## REFLECT (5 MINUTES)

Growing up, how did your family divide up responsibilities or chores? What did you do?

## DISCOVER (15 MINUTES)

**1)** If we are going to pattern our lives after Jesus we need to know His view of serving. Look up Mark 10:45. What did Jesus say about Himself regarding serving vs. being served? What was His ultimate act of serving?

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**2)** Read Philippians 2:3-8 and answer the following questions to see how Jesus' attitude and our attitudes should converge.

a. What attitudes and actions are we to have towards others?  
(Philippians 2:3-4)

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b. What were Jesus' attitudes and actions that we also should have?  
(Philippians 2:5-8)

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c. What word do you see repeated that describes both Jesus' attitude and ours? (Philippians 2:3 and Philippians 2:8)

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3) Turn a few pages back to the book of Galatians. Read Galatians 6:9-10. What are we told to do in these few verses?

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4) Read Romans 12:3-8. How is the church described? When you think of this analogy, what happens if one member does not function the way it is supposed to?

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## WATCH (10 MINUTES)

It is clear from Scripture that we are to have the same attitude towards serving that Jesus did. If we neglect our responsibility to serve one another, the body of Christ suffers. Let's listen as Pastor Jim talks about our responsibility to serve within our own church family and what that looks like practically.

## DISCUSS (20 MINUTES)

1) In what areas are you "mature" or "older?" In other words, what are your strengths that could be shared with others?



.....  
This could be a practical area such as handy with repairs.  
Maybe you have emotional strengths such as compassion or  
listening skills. Perhaps you are spiritually strong in prayer or  
reading Scripture. Go ahead...think outside the box!  
.....

- 2) Pastor Jim summed up serving as making disciples. Is this a new idea for you? Or are you already living out your role as a “missionary servant,” making disciples by mentoring someone who needs what you have?
- 3) Are you currently serving in a ministry within the church? If so, please share how you are a fit for that ministry. If not, is there one that could really use the skills and experiences that God has given you?
- 4) What encourages you to serve? What are obstacles to serving?

## **APPLY (5 MINUTES)**

Your small group is a little family inside the larger church family. Are you caring for your family well? What role or “chore” could you assume for the care of your family? Encourager? Baker? Organizer? Prayer-warrior? Helper?

Generate a list of responsibilities together and decide how you will step up and serve your family.

## **TAKE ACTION (5 MINUTES)**

This week, consider how you can serve in the larger church body (if you are not already doing so). There are opportunities all around you.

- Check out the various ministries in the back of the Connection, choose something you might be interested in, and get in touch with the contact person to ask a few questions.
- Perhaps you were able to make a connection through a recent minis try fair. If so, follow up with that person.
- Consider what you are already involved in. Every ministry, from weekend worship services to weekday classes to support groups, needs people to make it work.

Alternatively, you can join the “Service Projects” group on the HUB and respond to one-time service needs as you are able.

## PRAY

Close your time in prayer for one another. Pray that the Lord would give each of you insight into how He has gifted you and a passion to serve out of that gifting. Pray that He would equip you and lead you to the ministry He has chosen for you.

## FOR NEXT WEEK...

We will move beyond God's family and look at our responsibility to reach out to our neighbors as we continue to explore "Connecting to God's Work."



Turn to the back of your Guide and fill out the section entitled, "Following Through."

# SESSION 9 SENT: TO YOUR NEIGHBORS



**BIG IDEA** – Connecting to God’s Work includes loving your neighbors as yourself and making them a priority.



**SCRIPTURE** – Matthew 22:37-40

## REVIEW

Choose one or two people to who have taken a step towards serving within your group or the larger church body to share what they are doing. What feelings are you experiencing? How will you continue to move forward?

## INTRODUCTION

In our previous session, we were challenged to serve the family of God by getting involved in caring for the members of our group and participating in a church ministry. Jesus came to serve and He calls us to follow His example and serve others.

But we cannot stop with our own family. Jesus also calls us to move beyond the boundaries of our family and show His love to the world. This begins with reaching out to those who are in our immediate vicinity...our neighbors.

In this session, we will see why and how to follow the command to reach out and love our neighbors as we look at the way Jesus modeled this in His own life.

# PRAY

Begin this session with prayer for the group. Thank the Lord for the privilege we have in partnering with Him to love those around us. Pray that He would give each person insight into how they can reach out and love their neighbor as they work through this lesson together.

## REFLECT (5 MINUTES)

How well do you know your neighbors? How would you describe the "climate" in your neighborhood?

## DISCOVER (15 MINUTES)

**1)** Look up Matthew 22:36-40. What does Jesus identify as the two greatest commandments?

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**2)** There is purpose to loving your neighbor and it is not so that we can have great social lives. Read Ephesians 2:1-3. What phrases are used to describe a person who does not have a relationship with Jesus?

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**3)** Now read 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9. What will be the eternal condition of those who do not have a relationship with Jesus?

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.....  
This is very troubling imagery. While this is not meant for  
debate at this moment, it should spur you on to tell as many  
people about Jesus as you can.  
.....

**4)** We do not have to stand by and watch all of the people around us who do not have a relationship with Jesus fall into this eternal despair. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and answer the following questions.

a. What has God given to us, or entrusted to us? (verse 18-19)

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b. What does that make us? (verse 20)

---

## **WATCH (10 MINUTES)**

Living as disciples of Jesus is so much more than trying to live decent lives while we wait for heaven. We have a mission to accomplish and a mission field right in our own backyards. Let's listen as Pastor Jim talks about the strategic position God has placed us in and how we can love our neighbors as Jesus loved those around Him.

## **DISCUSS (20 MINUTES)**

**1)** Jesus was interruptible. Think about your schedule and the "neighbors" in your life – where you live, work, and play. Would you consider yourself interruptible? Can you give an example of an interruption and what your response was within the last week?

**2)** Jesus prioritized people over goals. Would you consider yourself more goal oriented or relationship oriented? How does your tendency influence your interactions with your neighbors?

3) Jesus did not allow the perceptions of others to interfere with ministering to those around Him. In what ways does pleasing the crowd affect loving your neighbors?

4) What needs to change for you to be more intentional in living out your identity as a missionary servant or ambassador for Christ? (e.g., priorities, schedule, attitude, confidence, etc.)



.....  
Change takes time and intention, and can be overwhelming. If the changes seem too difficult, break them down into small steps. What is one change you could make this week? This month?  
.....

### APPLY (5 MINUTES)

Our busy schedules are often a big hinderance in reaching out to our neighbors. Choose one small change that you can begin to implement in your life this week that will make room in your schedule for your neighbors. Perhaps you can watch one less TV show or put down your phone during your child’s lesson. Maybe you could spend more time outside in your yard rather than on the computer.

Write down any ideas that come to mind below and pick one to get started.

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## TAKE ACTION (5 MINUTES)

This week, take an intentional step to reach out to a neighbor. Take some time to get to know them better. You could invite them inside for a cup of coffee or help them with yardwork. If you are feeling ambitious you could plan an event such as a get-together for your neighbors.

Another suggestion is to read up on how to share your faith.\* Hopefully, the time will come when your efforts to get to know your neighbors will result in opportunities to share faith in Christ with them. At the very least, be prepared to share your own story of how you came to faith and how God works in your life.

## PRAY

Close your time in prayer for one another. Pray that the Lord would give each of you ample opportunities to follow His command to love your neighbors and that you would each grasp the significance of the impact you can have in their lives.

## FOR NEXT WEEK...

We will conclude this section of "Connecting to God's Work" and this ten week series by looking at the Great Commission to go and make disciples... everywhere!



Turn to the back of your guide and fill out the section entitled, "Following Through."

\* A few suggested titles on sharing your faith:

*"Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God"* by J.I. Packer

*"Evangelism for the Rest of Us"* by Mike Bechtle

*"Everyday Church"* by Tim Chester and Steve Timmis

*"A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission Around the Table"* by Tim Chester

# SESSION 10 SENT: TO THE WORLD



**BIG IDEA** – Our mission as children of God is to go and make disciples...in our neighborhoods, the region, and the world.



**SCRIPTURE** – Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20

## REVIEW

Choose one or two people to share experiences they have had in the past week reaching out to a neighbor. What did you do? What did you learn in the process?

## INTRODUCTION

Ten weeks ago we began this series with an invitation from Jesus...“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19) As we moved through each week we learned that this invitation calls us into a life of meaningful connections. We are welcomed into a personal relationship with God where we can know Him and talk with Him about anything. We are encouraged to pursue greater intimacy with others through authentic, loving relationships that nurture change and hope. And we are challenged to be on mission with God to serve one another and to bring outsiders into His family and help them grow in their new identity.

Jesus’ invitation to follow Him offers great purpose and means that He is in the lead. He shows you where to go and what to do. Just before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He gave His followers a final command that is often referred to as “The Great Commission.” In this command we, as His disciples, are charged with a very important mission.

In this last session, we will look at the Great Commission and see how we can participate in following Jesus’ command to go and make disciples of all nations.

# PRAY

As always, begin this session with prayer for the group. Thank the Lord for everything He has been showing you over the past 10 weeks. Pray that He will continue to unite your group, open your eyes to His will for your lives, and equip you for the journey.

## REFLECT (5 MINUTES)

How did you come to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

## DISCOVER (15 MINUTES)

1) Look up Acts 1:6-9 and answer the following questions.

a) Jesus tells His followers that they will be His witnesses. What does a witness do?

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b) Where are we supposed to be witnesses?

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c) Who supplies the power?

---

2) Turn to Matthew 28:18-20. This is the "Great Commission." What are we commanded to do according to these verses? What does Jesus say about Himself that should encourage us in carrying out this command?

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.....  
Do you remember the definition of a disciple from Matthew 4:19? Put simply, a disciple has three characteristics. A disciple (1) follows Christ (2) is being changed by Christ and (3) is on mission with Christ.  
.....

3) Paul, the author of 1 Corinthians, had a passion for making disciples and wrote about one of the methods he had for reaching people. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. What did he do to “win more of them” (verse 19) and “save some?” (verse 22)

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.....  
Paul is not telling us to be two-faced. Rather, he is calling us to embrace the freedom we have in Christ to understand and relate to the people we minister to, while remaining within the boundaries of divine truth.  
.....

## WATCH (10 MINUTES)

Let’s watch as Pastor Jim talks about Jesus’ command to go and make disciples beyond the borders of our neighborhoods and reach the world with the Gospel.

## DISCUSS (20 MINUTES)

- 1) It is clear from Scripture that making disciples does not end in our neighborhoods, but reaches far beyond into places and cultures that are different from us. Is there a place, a people group, or even a type of person that Jesus has laid on your heart and is calling you to? Is there something you are fearful of that makes it hard to step out of your comfort zone?
- 2) How do we “become all things to all people, that by all means [we] might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22) and yet live a “questionable life” that causes people to see something different? What does a balance like that look like?
- 3) Have you had an opportunity to minister to people who are different from you (missions trip, service project, etc.)? What did you learn from that experience? If you have not had that opportunity, is there something specific holding you back?
- 4) How has this 10 week series encouraged you to become a more intentional disciple of Jesus Christ?

## APPLY (5 MINUTES)

Think back over the past 10 weeks. What session has had the most impact on you? What is one big idea that you would like to take away from this series that God has been speaking to you about? Summarize it below.

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## TAKE ACTION (5 MINUTES)

This week make an appointment with God. Set aside 1 hour (or more) in your calendar to go back through your guide and have a conversation with Jesus about it. Ask Him how He would like you to put what you have learned into practice. Read through the "Following Through" section at the back of the guide and plan how you will move forward with your intentions.

Remember to thank Him for extending that life-changing invitation to follow Him into meaningful connections...and then get going and make disciples!

## PRAY

Close your time in prayer for one another. Pray that the Lord would grow within each one of you a passion for His Great Commission. Pray that He would enable you to recognize the opportunities that are all around you and give you the boldness and words to be His witnesses. Thank Him for this time that you have had together and pray that His will be done.

## IN CONCLUSION...

Read "What's Next?" at the back of your guide for a summary of this series and suggestions for continuing to follow God's call.



Turn to the back of your Guide and fill out the section entitled, "Following Through."

# WHAT'S NEXT?



We hope this series has been beneficial in your walk with Jesus and you've heard God's call. Now that you're finished with this series, you have to keep following God's call! Of course, you may be wondering, "What's next?" Let's look at this through the three connections we've been focusing on:

## 1. CONNECTING TO GOD

Certainly continue to worship Jesus both individually in private devotions and with the larger church body at our weekend services. And keep the "Following Through" plan before you and review it often. The Holy Spirit is the one who brings the change in our life, but we don't coast into maturity. The Bible says that in order to grow we need to sow to the Spirit, and not to the flesh. That is, we need to keep in step with the Holy Spirit and use strategies in our life that reinforce our repentance and faith in Jesus.

## 2. CONNECTING TO GOD'S PEOPLE

A big part of this series was also in helping you to see that you need community to grow as a Christian, and to experience real fellowship with those in your group. If you're a miniChurch, continue to practice the "one another" passages with those in your group. If you're a Plug-in Small Group, hopefully, your group will continue to meet. If this is the case, your Plug-in Small Group has the option to become a miniChurch. Our miniChurches at FAC are longer-term commitments to "do life together" with others in following Jesus. These small groups focus on connecting to God, God's people, and God's work. Talk to your Plug-in Small Group leader to find out more.

## 3. CONNECTING TO GOD'S WORK

In addition, listen to what God is telling you about where you should connect to His work. There are numerous ways throughout your day, and there are great opportunities at FAC to serve on a ministry team or serve on

a mission's trip. Talk with your miniChurch or Plug-in Group leader to find out more on how you can connect to God's work at FAC.

## COMMIT TO ALL THREE...

In offering these suggestions, I hope you see that you need all three when it comes to following Jesus. Each of these connections complement one another. It's hard to connect to God unless you're connecting to His people. In addition, connecting to God's work opens up more opportunities to connect with His people and further grow us in connecting to Him. You need all three!

Yes, there is a sacrifice and priorities in your life may have to be re-ordered, but there is great joy that you will find as you see and know who God is as you connect to Him, His people, and His work. As Jesus says in Mark 8:34-38:

"And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'" (Mark 8:34-38 ESV)

Keep listening to God's call and follow it in connecting to Him, His people, and His work! There is great joy, hope, and love found there!



# **FOLLOWING THROUGH**

# FOLLOWING THROUGH

(A PLAN FOR 2015)



"The difference between a goal and a dream is the written word."

*-unknown*

Writing down our goals is crucial to following through on them. As a result of your participation in this study, there are likely changes you would like to make in your life going forward. As you prepare for 2015, in order for your goals to not go the way of New Years' Resolutions from previous years, something needs to change. Toward that end, goals need to be SMART.

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**ttainable  
**R**elevant  
**T**ime-bound

Using the "take action" section of each lesson as a guide, you can fill out a new goal for each month of 2015 through October. This can serve as a guide for you to grow in your relationship with Christ over the next year.

**SESSION ONE** - **January** - I commit \_\_\_\_\_ minutes  
\_\_\_\_\_ days per week to reading \_\_\_\_\_ in the Bible.

**SESSION TWO** - **February** - I commit to spending \_\_\_\_\_  
minutes at \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm \_\_\_\_\_ days per week in  
conversation with God.

**SESSION THREE** - **March** - I commit to participating more fully in a small  
group by \_\_\_\_\_

**SESSION FOUR - April** - I commit to loving the people in my community better by praying regularly for them. Toward that end, I will pray for \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ days/week for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes each day.

**SESSION FIVE - May** - I commit to praying daily for three friends who do not know Christ. I will pray for \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , and \_\_\_\_\_. In addition, I will seek opportunities to spend time with them during the month by calling/emailing/texting (circle one) once per week.

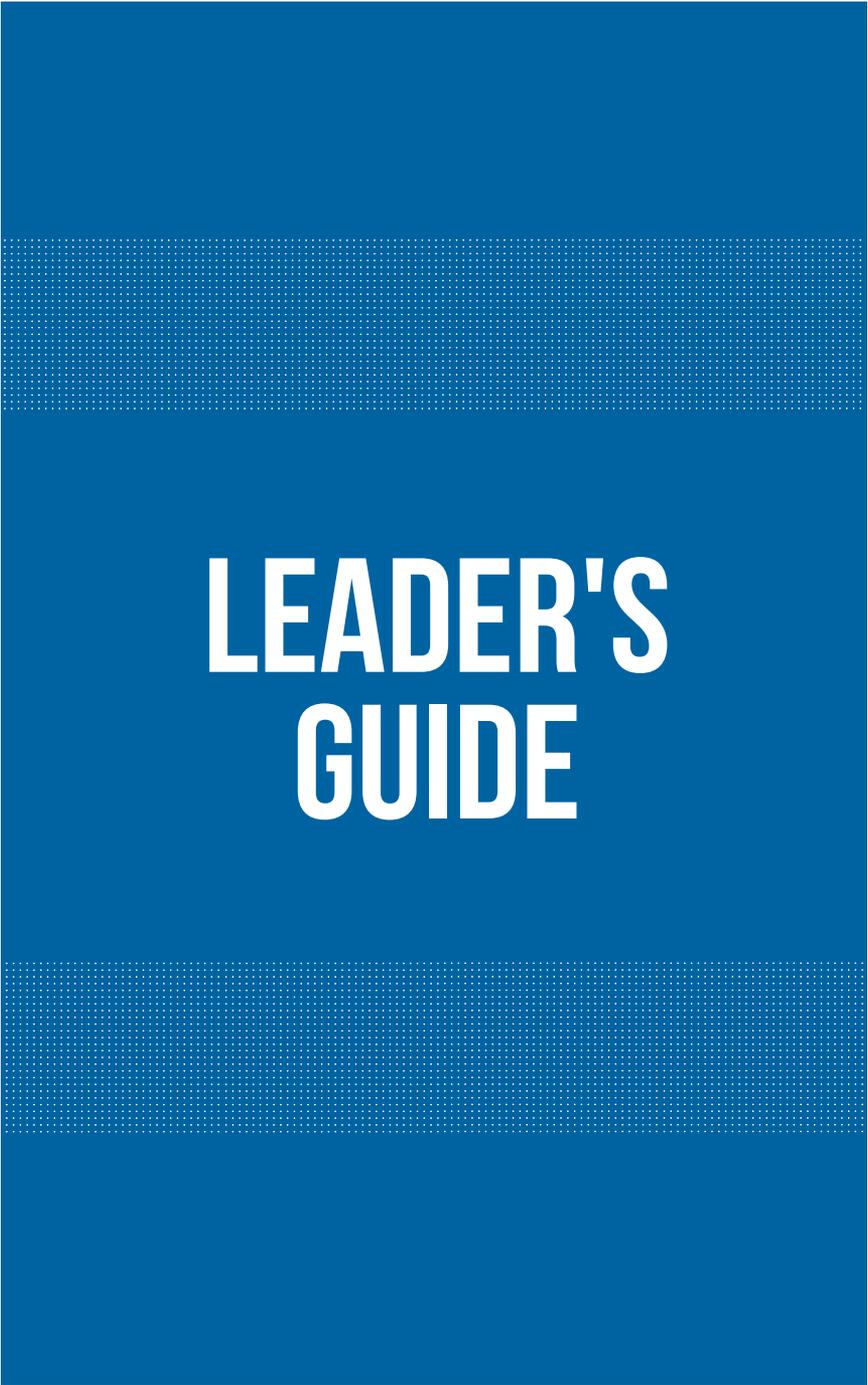
**SESSION SIX - June** - Since sharing transparently is important for the growth of our community as well as our growth as individuals, I will commit to meeting \_\_\_\_\_ times this month with one or two members of my community to pray together. During this time, I will share prayer requests that reflect my spiritual and/or emotional needs.

**SESSION SEVEN - July** - I will write down \_\_\_\_\_ number of things that I am grateful for in my relationship with God, God has done in my life, or evidence that I am a new creation \_\_\_\_\_ days/week.

**SESSION EIGHT - August** - (possible missions or ministry opportunities meetings)

**SESSION NINE - September** - as we enter the Fall, I will get to know my neighbors better by \_\_\_\_\_. In order to make the time in my schedule to get to know my neighbors, I will give up \_\_\_\_\_ .

**SESSION TEN - October** - Write a letter to yourself reflecting what you would like to remember about what you have learned about yourself and God during these 10 weeks. Place the letter in a self-addressed envelope and give it to your group leader at your last time together.

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# LEADER'S GUIDE

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## OVERVIEW

This Leader's Guide is designed to help you prepare for each session of the "Connect" Series. Within the Guide, you will see three section headers: **PRAY-PREPARE-PONDER**.

**PRAY** – As self-explanatory as it is, this is included as a reminder for you to pray for each group member by name and may include prayer items related to the session.

### *Section to complete:*

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Pray

**PREPARE** – By going through the lesson yourself before your group meets, consider how you would answer the reflection question. Discover God's truths for yourself as you complete the written lesson, looking up and thinking through the appropriate Scripture passages. Watch the 15-minute video teaching by one of the Pastors before your group meets. General notes are included for each of the video teachings.

### *Sections to complete:*

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Reflect  
Discover  
Watch

**PONDER** – Reflect on how you would answer the discussion and application questions. Complete the "Take Action" and "Following Through" sections in your Study Guide. End your preparation time in prayer.

*Sections to complete:*

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Discuss

Apply

Take Action

Pray

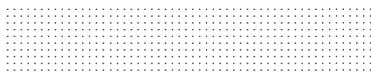
“Following Through”

**Suggested Prep Time as a Small Group Leader:** Several days before your group meets, set aside about 45 minutes for you to go through the lesson yourself and prepare for leading your group. This also gives you time to think about the week’s lesson and digest the material yourself, and allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to you personally throughout the week.

# CONNECTING TO GOD

Sessions 1 and 2 encourage group members to connect to God by following Jesus (Session 1) and by spending time with God in personal and meaningful conversation (Session 2).

## SESSION 1 FOLLOW



### SCRIPTURE VERSES REFERENCED:

**Lesson:** John 10:10; Luke 9:23; Mark 1:17; John 8:12, 10:27-28; Acts 4:13.

**Video:** Matt. 4:18-20; Rom. 8:29

### BEFORE THE SESSION: **Pray – Prepare – Ponder**

**PRAY:** Pray for each group member by name and that each would take a deeper step in following Him within these 10 weeks.

**PREPARE:** See Pages 5-6

### VIDEO NOTES:

**Key Scripture:** Matt. 4:18-20

**Big Idea:** Jesus calls each person as an individual to follow Him. How have you responded?

What does 'connecting to God' really mean? How can you grow deeper in this area of your life?

- Connecting to God means following Jesus (eg. Peter).
- Connecting to God means transformation: He is conforming you into the image of His Son.
- Connecting to God means you no longer live for yourself.

Consider your responses to the questions Pastor Don posed in the video:

- Is the focus of your life really on Jesus and following Him?
- Are you allowing Him to change you, to transform you into His image?
- Are you allowing Him to expand your heart with His love for the lost, those who don't know that they could have this relationship with Him too?

**PONDER:** See Pages 7- 9

## SESSION 2 CONVERSATION

### SCRIPTURE VERSES REFERENCED:

**Lesson:** Matt. 14:19-20, 23; 19:13; Mark 1:35, 14:32-39; Luke 6:12-13, 22:31-32; John 15:4-8

**Video:** 1 Kings 19:9-13

### BEFORE THE SESSION: **Pray – Prepare – Ponder**

**PRAY:** Pray for each group member by name and that each would hear God's voice in their personal devotions this week.

**PREPARE:** See Pages 10-11

### VIDEO NOTES:

**Key Scripture:** 1 Kings 19:9-13

**Big Idea:** God wants to communicate with each person. How do (could) you spend time with God?

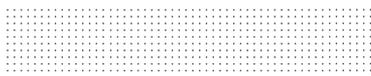
- Elijah – hearing God's voice in a whisper – up on the mountain, at the entrance of the cave.
- Connecting with God begins with a conversation.
- Dealing with the distractions and really focusing on Him.

**PONDER:** Pages 12-13

# CONNECTING TO GOD'S PEOPLE

Sessions 3 – 6 encourage group members to move beyond just a “God-and-me” mindset to also consider fellow believers within the Christian community. Small group members will examine the importance of connecting to God’s people: changing to become more Christ-like (Session 3), loving one another (Session 4), being a witness for Christ (Session 5), and for a lifetime of hope (Session 6).

## SESSION 3 CHANGE



### SCRIPTURE VERSES REFERENCED:

**Lesson:** : Eph. 4:11-16, 20-24; Gal. 5:19-26

**Video:** Eph. 4:15-24; Heb. 10:24-25

### BEFORE THE SESSION: **Pray – Prepare – Ponder**

**PRAY:** Pray for each group member by name and that each would recognize where (or how) God may be calling them to change.

**PREPARE:** See Pages 15-16

### VIDEO NOTES:

**Key Scripture:** Ephesians 4:15-16

**Big Idea:** The Lord uses people in community to change us. What is a healthy community, and how do we experience change through participation (eg. authenticity)?

-NOTE: This session sets the group up for the following weeks, which all require transformation to accomplish – a community of truth, repentance, and grace.

A healthy Christian community is ...

- A community of truth – speaking the truth in love; pointing others to Christ; building up one another.
  - A community of repentance – encouraging others to turn from sinful lives and desires and to turn to God’s greatness and goodness.
  - A community of grace – showing the same grace Jesus shows us.
- We can be communities of truth and repentance only if we are communities of grace.

**PONDER:** Pages 17-19

## SESSION 4 LOVE



### SCRIPTURE VERSES REFERENCED:

**Lesson:** 1 Cor.13:1-3; John 13:1-17; John 15:12

**Video:** John 15:12; some “One Another” passages (Rom.12:10, 15:7; Gal. 5:13, 6:2; Col. 3:13; 1 Thess.4:18); Mark 10:45; 1 John 3:1; Rom. 5:9-10

### BEFORE THE SESSION: **Pray – Prepare – Ponder**

**PRAY:** Pray for each group member by name and that God would reveal to each member ways in which they can extend a more Christ-like love to others.

**PREPARE:** See Pages 20-22

*Note:* Love Languages. (Reflection Question)

Dr. Gary Chapman is the author of several books on the “Five Love Languages” – quality time, words of affirmation, gifts, acts of service or physical touch. Dr. Chapman explains that by recognizing one’s own love language and those of others closest to them, communication and understanding is increased between two people and relationships can be strengthened.

Some of Dr. Chapman's popular books include:

- *The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts* (2009, Northfield Publishing).
- *The Five Love Languages of Children* (2012, Moody Publishers).
- *The Five Love Languages Singles Edition* (2014, Northfield Publishing).

## VIDEO NOTES:

**Key Scripture:** John 15:12

**Big Idea:** We are commanded to love each other as Jesus loved us. What does 'real love' look like and how do we show that to the members of this group (shepherding)?

Some "One Another" Passages:

- Rom. 12:10 – "Be devoted to one another – give preference to one another."
- Rom. 15:7 – accept one another
- Galatians 5:13 – serve one another
- Galatians 6:2 – bear one another's burdens
- Colossians 3:13 – forgive one another
- 1 Thessalonians 4:18 – comfort one another

Looking at how Jesus loves us:

- He serves us – by using His power and position for their needs; by sacrifice.
- He shares with us – God's Word, the truth; His life.
- He bridges the gap with us – with love, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

**PONDER:** Pages 23-24

# SESSION 5 WITNESS



## SCRIPTURE VERSES REFERENCED:

**Lesson:** 1 Thess. 1:4-10; 2:5-14; 4:9-10; Acts 2:42-47

**Video:** John 13:35; Acts 2:42-47

## BEFORE THE SESSION: **Pray – Prepare – Ponder**

**PRAY:** Pray for each group member by name and to recognize ways that God is calling them to change to be a more godly witness for Christ.

**PREPARE:** See Pages 25-26

## VIDEO NOTES:

**Key Scripture:** John 13:35

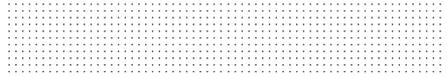
**Big Idea:** Our love is a witness to those around us. Christ-like love in community looks different than what the world is used to. People will know that we follow Jesus by our love for one another. We are a witness to each other and a witness to the outside world looking in. What does this look like in practical terms?

The early church lived their life together as a witness.

- Their witness was based on a community life that was attractive to non-Christians (Acts 2:42-47).
- Their witness was church-centered (Acts 2:47). Unbelievers were saved and incorporated into the church body.

**PONDER:** Pages 27-29

# SESSION 6 HOPE



## SCRIPTURE VERSES REFERENCED:

**Lesson:** Eccles. 4:9-12; Heb. 10:19-25

**Video:** Rom. 5:1; Gal. 2:20, 5:16

## BEFORE THE SESSION: **Pray – Prepare – Ponder**

**PRAY:** Pray for each group member by name and that each would recognize ways in which they, as part of the Christian community, can nurture hope in the lives of others.

**PREPARE:** See Pages 30-31

## VIDEO NOTES:

**Key Scripture:** Galatians 2:20

**Big Idea:** We connect to God's people for a lifetime of hope. What does this look like?

Jesus brings peace to the here and now between us and God:

- Jesus paid the penalty for our sin (Rom.5:1)
- Jesus has broken the power of sin (Gal. 2:20)

Christians face an ongoing battle between the Spirit and the flesh and the presence of sin in their lives. Christians need other Christians to help and support them to become more like Christ (ie. the sanctification process).

Consider your responses to the questions Pastor Dave posed in the video:

- Are you ready for a lifetime of change?
- Are you ready for a lifetime of real community – connecting to God's people?

**PONDER:** Pages 32-33

# CONNECTING TO GOD'S WORK

Sessions 7 – 10 encourage group members to join God in the work He is doing in the world by living out your new identity in Christ (Session 7); by loving the church body (Session 8); by loving our neighbors (Session 9); and by reaching out to the world around us and beyond (Session 10).

## SESSION 7 IDENTITY



### SCRIPTURE VERSES REFERENCED:

**Lesson:** Eph. 2:12-13, 19-22; Rom. 8:14-17

**Video:** Rom. 28:19-20; Rom. 8:15; John 13:12-20, 20:21-22

### BEFORE THE SESSION: **Pray – Prepare – Ponder**

**PRAY:** Pray for each group member by name and that each would come to a greater understanding of their new identity in Christ as a member of God's family and as a disciple of Christ.

**PREPARE:** See Pages 35-36

### VIDEO NOTES:

**Key Scripture:** Matt. 28:19-20

**Big Idea:** If you are a Christ-follower, you are part of God's family and have a new identity, new name and new purpose. And as such, you do what your family (community) and your Father (God) does.

- You have a new identity
  - = God is your new Father (Rom. 8:15)
  - = New family name and a new purpose (Matt. 28:19-20)
  - = Saved to serve (John 13:12-20)
  - = Missionary servants: sent as disciples who make disciples (John 20:21-22)

- Living like a family ... with estranged family members out there needing to come back.
  - Go and make disciples.
  - So where do we start?
    - =It's not about doing ... it's about being ... it's who we are (ie. "Connecting to God's Work" at the core).

**PONDER:** Pages 37-39

## SESSION 8 CHURCH



### SCRIPTURE VERSES REFERENCED:

**Lesson:** Mark 10:45; Phil. 2:3-8; Gal. 6:9-10; Rom. 12:3-8

**Video:** Gal. 6:10; Acts 2:40-47; 6:1-7, 8:1-40

### BEFORE THE SESSION: **Pray – Prepare – Ponder**

**PRAY:** Pray for each group member by name and that each would grow in their understanding of what it looks like for them to be a missionary servant within God's family, the church.

**PREPARE:** See Pages 40-41

### VIDEO NOTES:

**Key Scripture:** Galatians 6:10

**Big Idea:** God loves you...and the Church. As disciples of Christ, we are called to live out our role as a missionary servant within God's family, the church.

Connecting to God's work by ... being a missionary servant within God's family, the church, means:

- Loving and serving the family of God (Gal. 6:10).

- Living like everything you have is from God and giving it back to Him to use (Acts 2:40-47).
- Being humble and knowing who you are 'in Christ' (Acts 6:1-7)
- Being sent to make disciples (8:1-40; story of Philip)

**PONDER:** Pages 42-44

## SESSION 9 NEIGHBORS



### SCRIPTURE VERSES REFERENCED:

**Lesson:** Matt. 22:36-40; Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Thess. 1:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:17-21

**Video:** Luke 8:40-56; Matt. 22:34-40

### BEFORE THE SESSION: **Pray – Prepare – Ponder**

**PRAY:** Pray for each group member by name and that each one would consider how to better love their neighbors as God calls us to.

**PREPARE:** See Pages 45-46

### VIDEO NOTES:

**Key Scripture:** Luke 8:40-56

**Big Idea:** God loves you ... and your neighbor. God loves the people around us and calls us to be involved in their lives. How can our stories intersect with theirs?

- Building authentic relationship with your neighbors
  - = Pray for open doors – open hearts – open mouths (speaking the truth in love in small or big ways).
- Learning from Jesus' example
  - = Jesus was interruptible (Luke 8:40-48).
  - = Jesus valued people over goals and status (Luke 8:49-56).
  - = Jesus was more concerned about doing the will of God than what the crowd thought of Him.

- Loving God and loving your neighbor (Matt. 22:34-40).

**PONDER:** Pages 47-49

## SESSION 10 WORLD



### SCRIPTURE VERSES REFERENCED:

**Lesson:** Matt. 4:19, 28:18-20; Acts 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 9:19-23

**Video:** Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-10

### BEFORE THE SESSION: **Pray – Prepare – Ponder**

**PRAY:** Pray for each group member by name. Pray that their hearts and eyes would be opened to how they can share the love of Jesus with others in the world.

**PREPARE:** See Pages 50-51

### VIDEO NOTES:

**Key Scripture:** Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:1-10

**Big Idea:** God loves you ... and the rest of the world too. Jesus commands us to broaden our horizons and make disciples of all nations. How can we be obedient to that command here at home and throughout the world?

- God equips (Acts 1:5). He gives us the roadmap and His Spirit to lead us.
- God sends His disciples (including us): locally, to regions beyond, and to the world (Acts 1:8).
- No matter where the place, the "mission" is the same: For FAC people to be a part of the community, share the love of Jesus with others, and to invite people to find their identity in Jesus and His family.

**PONDER:** Pages 52-53

# VIDEO VIEWING OPTIONS



## OPTION 1: DVD

Each group leader will be provided with a standard definition DVD to watch the videos on a TV or laptop.

## OPTION 2: VIMEO

All of the videos have been uploaded to the FAC Vimeo web page in 1080p high definition. There are two methods of watching via Vimeo.

**Method 1:** To view on Vimeo's website through a computer or mobile device, please follow these steps:

1. Go to: [www.myfac.org/connect](http://www.myfac.org/connect)
2. Scroll to the bottom of the page where you will find links for each of the ten video sessions.
3. Click a link for the desired session and you will be taken to a special viewing page where you can watch the video.

**Method 2:** Vimeo provides an app to watch their videos compatible with most mobile devices, streaming players, and smart TVs. The Vimeo app can be downloaded through your devices app store or applicable interface. To find out more please visit:

<https://vimeo.com/everywhere>

## OPTION 3: DOWNLOADED .MP4 SOURCE FILES

This option provides the highest quality viewing experience. It's available to those who have a smart TV capable of playing downloaded .MP4 files, either through a USB flash drive, network drive, or media player. To download the original source .MP4 files, first follow the steps listed above in **Method 1**. Once you are on the Vimeo web page for the desired session's video, click on the grey button titled "Clip Info/Download." Then click on the link that appears titled "Original .MP4 file." The .MP4 file will automatically download to your hard-drive. Once it has finished downloading you may then transfer that file to the device of your choice to watch on your TV in high quality 1080p resolution.





# CONNECT

SMALL GROUP SERIES