

**CONNECTING
THE
UNCONNECTED**



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UNCONNECTED**



NORTHSIDE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



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WELCOME TO CONNECTING THE UNCONNECTED!

The on-ramp to eternity is found only in **JESUS**. As His followers, we are called to make Jesus known and point the way. This is what it means to connect the unconnected. But, you cannot help connect others without first being connected. Being connected is both a place of beginning and ongoing following. It is both a place of growing in spiritual maturity and living it out. The on-ramp is through Jesus, but it doesn't end there. It is a lifetime of travel and transformation with God.

When you CONNECT TO CHRIST you receive new life and relationship with Jesus	When you CONNECT TO COMMUNITY you are not alone and learn how to be like Jesus	When you CONNECT TO CALLING you find purpose and live like Jesus
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How do we live a life truly connected to Jesus and to others? How do we make Him known and point people toward Him? The journey starts with something small, yet powerful: the prefix **“co.”** It means *“with” or “together.”* It's the often-overlooked beginning of **CO**nnect, and it holds the key to a deeper faith. When we connect with Jesus Christ, we are never on our own, **HE IS WITH US**.

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”) Matthew 1:23	“...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:20b	“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit...” John 15:5a
“Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God’s presence.” Ephesians 3:12 (NLT)	“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” Revelation 3:20	

When Jesus is truly with us, nothing stays the same. His presence transforms our lives and, through us, the lives of others. We're not just called to remain close to Him, but to point others toward Him. That's the heartbeat of this study and the prayer for your group. Over the next seven weeks, we challenge you to dive in, and intentionally learn how to **Connect the Unconnected to Christ, Community, and Calling**.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

For the next seven weeks, this guide will serve as your map for the journey through the *Connecting The Unconnected* group study. Below you will find overviews of all the components for the adventure ahead.

1. Video Teaching:

Each week, there is a short video unpacking the big ideas for each session. We recommend groups watch this video during or in preparation for your group time. The videos for this study can be found at www.mynorthside.com/ctu

2. Daily Devotion Guide:

This is a weekly, 5-day guide to help you dive into the big ideas for each session. Each daily devotion consists of Scripture to read, paragraphs to ponder, and a couple questions to process through journaling. Don't think of it as homework, but time growing alongside your Heavenly Father. Here are some quick tips to help:

Be Intentional: Intentionally set aside 15-30 minutes in your schedule. You may need to get up early, watch less TV, limit social media, or rearrange something to create space.

Be Flexible: You will miss a day or two along the way. The good news is that this is a weekly, 5-day devotional. That means there are two days of grace to help you get back on track. If you miss a day, just pick back up where you left off.

Be Persistent: Just like exercising, this may seem a little bit overwhelming at first. You may even feel a little pain from stretching spiritual muscles that haven't been used in a while. Stick with it.

Be Ready To Discuss: God is doing a good work in you so that you can help others in your group grow spiritually. Come ready to discuss what you are learning through the daily devotions at your group.

3. Group Discussion Guide:

Each group session is broken down into four sections:

GET STARTED: Get to know each other and start discussing.

TAKE IT IN: Watch the teaching video and discuss what you are learning.

TALK IT OVER: Engage with the Bible and discuss the big idea for the session.

LIVE IT OUT: Discover practical ways to live out what you're learning.

4. Family Conversations:

These are weekly devotions and conversation starters to bring the biblical truths of the *Connecting The Unconnected* study into your home.

5. Experiences:

Experiential learning shifts discipleship from knowing to practicing. This study includes two discipleship experiences. The first takes place during Session 4 and the second after Session 7. You can learn more about these experiences in the Appendixes.

SESSION 1

THE GREAT COMMISSION
IS MY MISSION





The Mission Impossible franchise is known for this famous phrase, “Your mission, should you choose to accept it...” As followers of Jesus, we have a mission that we chose to accept the day we placed our faith in Him. This mission is to connect unconnected people to Jesus. Or, in the words of Jesus, “Go and make disciples...”

Stephen Covey writes, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”¹ If you reflect on your life, what is your mission or main thing? Jesus is calling you to make His mission yours. It is a mission of purpose and priority, changing the way we view and encounter the people around us. It invites us to help others learn how to follow Jesus as we continue to follow Him. What does this mission look like in our lives? In one word, CONNECT. This is the essence of being a disciple of Jesus.



C.S. Lewis writes, “...the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose.”² It is hard not to be challenged by these words, because we have all wasted time by being too focused on other missions. The good news is that the prefix “co” in connect means “with” or “together.” We are not alone because we are working alongside our Savior to help draw people to Him.

The big question we have to ask ourselves,

“WILL I MAKE JESUS’ MISSION, MY MISSION?”

¹ Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, and Rebecca R. Merrill, *First Things First* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 75.

² C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 199.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:34-35

“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus.² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”³ Then Jesus told them this parable:⁴ “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

Luke 15:1-7



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DAY 1 | MY MISSION: MAKE DISCIPLES

by Andy Clark

"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

My mission, your mission, is a kingly mission. The final words of Jesus express His heart and purpose. They aren't just suggestions, they're marching orders from our King. How do we know this, because Jesus begins by telling us that He has all authority. Let that sink in: **ALL authority. Everywhere.** That means there is no part of your life, or this world, that Jesus doesn't rule over.

The Bible reveals Jesus' authority:

Over creation & nature Mark 4:39-41	Over sickness Luke 9:1-2	Over demons and the spiritual forces of evil Mark 1:27
Over the religious leaders Matthew 7:28-29	Over the secular leaders Colossians 1:16-17	Over death Acts 2:24, Romans 6:9

Through the cross and the empty tomb, Jesus has been given the name above all names because He is the King. **Only Jesus can carry all authority and that's really good news, because He's a far better King than we'll ever be.**

Our King has a mission. His command is to, "Go and make disciples." This isn't just for pastors, missionaries, seasoned disciples, or extroverts. This is for **YOU**. It is your mission.

Regardless of your job, schedule, status, gender, or age, every disciple is called to make disciples because we are all citizens of His kingdom. Our King has given us a command and a purpose. He has placed you where you are for a reason, to represent His Kingdom.

How does disciple making become my mission? **We start by inviting people into our lives.**

- It's a shared meal or coffee.
- It's opening your home.
- It's turning your regular spaces (workplace, school, neighborhood) into mission fields.
- It's being available.

When the right moment comes, **you point people to Jesus.** You show them His love through your life, and His truth through your words. You tell people about your King! As we begin this journey of learning to connect the unconnected, it starts with surrendering to the authority of Jesus. When we do that, we begin to own His mission, and it becomes ours.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Where in your life do you struggle to surrender to Jesus' authority? What does it look like for you to daily say, "You are the King, and I am not?"

In your life right now, how might God be calling you to better own the mission of making disciples?

DAY 2 | BAPTIZING THEM

by Andy Clark

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."

Matthew 28:19

BAPTISM IS A DECLARATION!

It's the moment someone publicly says, *"I belong to Jesus. He is my King."* It's a decision to draw a line in the sand and step fully into the Kingdom of God.

But, this moment is just the beginning. The Greek word for baptism—*baptizo*—means to be immersed, soaked, or saturated. This refers to being fully immersed under water. That is what we usually watch and celebrate when someone is baptized. However, this isn't just about a single event; it's about an ongoing reality.

Baptism is both a moment and a way of life.

When we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it's not just by the authority of, **it's also immersed into a relationship with.** We are no longer tourists in the Kingdom of God passing through on a visit. We are now citizens of Heaven, fully immersed. This immersion shapes our lives, prioritizes our purpose, and is what we are striving to connect people to. We are not connecting them to a pool of water, but a new way of living following Jesus.

Maybe you are following Jesus, but not ready to believe in Him. Keep following. Keep seeking. Keep asking questions.

Maybe you are following Jesus, believe in Him, but have not taken the step of baptism by immersion. Maybe it's time to stop waiting and follow Jesus' example of being baptized (Matthew 3:13-17). Start by talking to a Christian mentor or friend. Or, learn more at mynorthside.com/baptism.

Maybe you are following Jesus, believe in Him, and have been baptized by immersion. What if God is calling you to more? You may have friends, coworkers, or even your own kids asking questions about faith and baptism. You could pass them off to a minister, but what if God wants you to grow and disciple them? Maybe your next step is to overcome a fear and be better equipped to make more disciples.

So, where do you need to immerse your life into following Jesus? Prayerfully ponder this question today.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

How does viewing baptism as the start of an immersed life, not just a one-time event, change the way you think about following Jesus?

[illegible]

What do you need to do to immerse yourself deeper into following Jesus? What roadblocks might be holding you back?

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DAY 3 | TEACHING THEM TO OBEY

by Andy Clark

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:19-20

It's important to note that Jesus says teach them to **obey** everything I have commanded. Too often, we settle for knowing about Jesus rather than following Him. We sometimes turn discipleship into a classroom exercise instead of a daily lifestyle.

Think of it like this: you can study every rule and strategy of a sport, but if you never step onto the field, you'll never grow as a player. **Obedience is the field.** That's where the real learning happens. There's a world of difference between knowing you should forgive, and actually forgiving someone. Between knowing you should love your enemies, and actually doing it.

OBEDIENCE IS WHAT MAKES OUR FAITH REAL

When it comes to obedience, we usually think about it in two contexts: kids or dogs. With kids, obedience usually sounds like "If you don't follow the rules, you're getting grounded." With dogs it sounds like, "Sit. Stay. Roll over. Good boy, here's a treat!"

We can take these two ideas and project them onto God. We think, "If I mess up, God's going to punish me." This traps us in an exhausting game of Simon Says. We also think, "If I perform well, I'll get a spiritual treat." This traps us into focusing on our behavior in order to earn God's favor. Here's the truth that flips these things upside down, and maybe this is what you need to hear today. **God will never love you more than He does right now, and He will never love you less.**

Right here, right now, let's redefine what obedience means. **Obedience is a habit of grace in developing godly character.** In this definition, grace implies there will be ups and downs in our relationship with God as we learn. Developing implies that this is a process. Godly character is what He wants to produce in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Obedience is not perfection, but a lifestyle of learning from the One who is. There will be mistakes. There will be things to learn and unlearn. This brings us to the best part. Matthew 28:20b says, *"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* **The King who commands us to obey, promises to walk with us as we do.**

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Can you recall a time when obedience to Jesus led to growth, healing, or transformation in your life?

[illegible]

Have there been any moments in your faith journey where you settled for knowing about Jesus rather than actively following Him? Right now, is there a specific area (forgiveness, generosity, relationships, priorities, etc...) where obedience is being delayed or avoided?

[illegible]

DAY 4 | WHO ARE THE UNCONNECTED

by Taylor Harrison

"Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus.² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'"

Luke 15:1-2

These religious leaders did everything they could to avoid "unclean" people. They went so far as to create boundaries on top of God's law to maintain their separation and reputation. They thought God would eventually destroy these unconnected sinners, and could not comprehend trying to reconcile them back into a relationship with Him.

We are all unclean. **We are all sinners.** But God, in His mercy, made a way for us to have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. In His time on earth, **Jesus was always around those who needed Him most.** He didn't let other people's assumptions hinder the work God called Him to. **Are you following His example?**

In Mark 2:17 Jesus says, *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* The unconnected are those who haven't put their faith in Jesus. As a Christian, it is easy to get in a bubble where you are only surrounded by other believers, but that wasn't what Jesus did. **He went after the lost sheep and brought them home.**

It's funny that eating with sinners was the worst part of what Jesus did according to the Pharisees. It wasn't at church, but in someone's home that Jesus ministered to people. It wasn't formal, **it was personal.** Each of us has a unique sphere of influence where we can reach so many unconnected people. Follow the model Jesus set before us to connect the unconnected.

DO YOU SOMETIMES FEEL DISCONNECTED EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A FOLLOWER OF JESUS?

If you're anything like me, you relate too much to the Pharisees. Someone who knows all about God, but is missing what is right in front of them. Someone who is so focused on the rules that they miss God moving around them. The good news is we have a God full of grace. He is a God that runs to us when we are far off and loves us when we push Him away. Connection to God always begins with trust. Who are you trusting with your life? Prayerfully reflect on your relationship with God. Take a moment today to lay everything before God and put your full trust in Him.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Are you stuck in a Christian bubble? Do you know anyone who is unconnected?
What is one step you can take to make them a more regular part of your life?

Where are you feeling disconnected from God right now? Is there something you
need to surrender to Him today?

DAY 5 | WHO ARE THE CONNECTED

by Andy Wing

Then Jesus told them this parable:⁴ “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’” I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

Luke 15:3-7

Luke 15 is a very familiar passage containing 3 stories: The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Lost Son. **When all three were found, there was rejoicing and celebrating.** Jesus said that is what happens in Heaven when ONE person comes to Christ.

In Luke 15, Jesus is emphasizing that to be in this world without God is to be lost. He says in Luke 19:10, *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”* When you are lost, you are separated, or unconnected. When you are found, you are connected.

Jesus loved the lost. Tax collectors, notorious sinners, you, and me. They all crowded around Jesus, and the Pharisees and teachers of the law could not believe what Jesus was doing. **He was Connecting with the Unconnected.** It is so interesting to see that all of these people were drawn to Jesus, but not to the Pharisees. The Pharisees would intentionally remind the unconnected of their flaws, sins, mistakes, and everything else that made them feel disconnected from God. In reality, these leaders were lost in their own misunderstandings of connection to God.

People who were far from God weren’t drawn to Jesus because He ignored their sin or gave them a free pass. They were drawn to Him because He loved and cared for them. He offered a connection.

Luke 15 reminds us that the shepherd chose to leave the 99 to go find the one. The shepherd never said “good riddance, I have 99, so that is good enough.” **99 is not good enough!** The shepherd’s first reaction was to go find the lost sheep. When he finds that lost one, he joyfully puts the lamb on his shoulders. Notice that he doesn’t punish or correct the lamb, and he’s not disappointed in the choices made. Instead, he celebrates and tells everyone he’s found his lost sheep.

At some point in our lives, we were the lost sheep. **Jesus never looked down on us, He chased us down.** This is the love Jesus has for us. If you ever felt lost, take hope from this story and know the value you have to God the Father. He is writing our story. When a sheep wanders, He pursues the one and brings it home. In that restoration, we connect to Jesus. Then, following His example, we join the mission of helping others connect to Him.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Reflect on a time in your life when you felt distant or separated from God. Maybe it was before you started following Jesus, or maybe it was sometime after. What were the circumstances and what helped you connect to God?

When you think about Jesus going after the one sheep, what does that reveal about your personal value to Him? Similarly, what encouragement do you find in the truth that you are connected to God?

SESSION 1 | GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GET STARTED

We all follow something (influencers, bands, authors, sports teams, TV shows, people, trends, etc...). **What's something that you follow? What's something you follow that you are a little embarrassed to admit? Why are you drawn to follow either of your answers?**

If you could apprentice and learn from a master in any field, what would you choose? Why?

New Groups: Introduce the *Getting To Know You* activity (pg. 130)

TAKE IT IN

Watch Session 1: The Great Commission Is My Mission at mynorthside.com/ctu.

What encouraged or challenged you from the video and daily study guide this week?

TALK IT OVER

Read Matthew 28:18-20; John 13:34-35; 1 John 2:3-6

The word disciple simply means a learner or follower. A disciple would have been someone who followed their teacher in order to become like them and continue their work. Through these three passages, Jesus begins defining what His followers look like. **Using the passages, what characteristics of a disciple do you see?**

Disciples live connected to Jesus. Obedience is a habit of grace in developing godly character. Our lives change as the Holy Spirit helps us live like Jesus. **Looking back on your faith journey, what were some important steps of obedience for you? Looking ahead, what is one next step you want to take to move forward in your faith?**

Disciples are growing in love. **Looking back on your faith journey, how has a follower of Jesus shown love to you? Looking forward, is there someone(s) specific God is calling you to love? What does that love look like in a real, tangible way?**

Disciples connect others to Jesus. Many times, Matthew 28:18-20 is viewed as the mission for "advanced" disciples. All followers of Jesus have the same mission of making more disciples. **Is there someone specific in your life that you are intentionally helping learn how to follow Jesus? If so, share some of the journey.**

Read Luke 15:1-7

Connecting the unconnected sums up this parable, because Jesus has a heart for the one. **Have you witnessed someone who was far from God experience transformation from following Jesus? Have you witnessed someone who was connected to God experience a new shift in priorities in following Jesus? In either case, share a story.**

The religious elite were complaining about Jesus spending time with those far away from God. Sometimes, we can get so lost in our own efforts to serve God that we find ourselves more unconnected than we realize. **Have you ever caught yourself comparing your spiritual journey to others instead of focusing on Jesus? How can spiritual success or maturity sometimes become a stumbling block?**

We all have people in our lives that we would consider our one's. Maybe they don't know Jesus yet. Or, they do know Jesus, but are not really connected to Him. **How can our group become a place where we can be equipped to reach our one's? What is an area of your relationship with God you would like to be better equipped to reach the one's in your life?**

WHO ARE THE ONE'S IN YOUR LIFE? HOW CAN WE BE PRAYING FOR YOU AND THEM?

LIVE IT OUT

Our mission is to connect the unconnected to Jesus. We help people connect to Jesus and live connected to Jesus. Where do you need to continue growing? Is there a next step of obedience to take? Is there someone God is challenging you to love better? Is there someone you should be intentionally helping to follow Jesus? Prayerfully ponder the answers to these questions. The good news is that we are not meant to do this alone. Invite your group into the journey. Encourage and equip one another in faith so that you can go and make disciples.

Daily Devotions: Take 15-30 minutes each day to dive into the *Connecting The Unconnected* daily devotions. Don't think of it as homework, but time growing alongside your Heavenly Father. Come ready to discuss what you are learning at the next group session.

Memorize: *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* **Matthew 28:19-20**

SESSION 1 | FAMILY CONVERSATIONS

These family conversations are designed to help you create moments to talk about God and faith in your family. We want to encourage you to carve out a moment each week to read and discuss each family conversation. This could be over the dinner table, before bedtime, or whenever works best for your family. In each family conversation, you will find four parts.

Scripture: Read the passage out loud, or encourage a family member to read.	Devotion: Read this to your family.	Conversation: Pick and choose what questions are best for your family to discuss.	Prayer: Pray for your family or encourage a family member to pray.
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Just as a heads-up, things probably won’t go as planned with your family conversations. Your family may interrupt, someone probably won’t pay attention, and there may not be any grand spiritual moments. What matters most is that you are seeking God as a family. Faith in your family is more often caught than taught. Your family will most likely forget these devotions, but they will remember the intentionality and time together. That will set the stage for you to model faith and continue building a spiritual legacy in your family.

SCRIPTURE:

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

DEVOTION:

Think about the words copilot, co-worker, and collaborate. What do they all have in common? They all have something to do with working together. In fact, the prefix “co” found at the beginning of each of those words means “with” or “together.” A copilot helps fly a plane, a coworker works alongside you, and collaborating means accomplishing something together.

Matthew 28:18-20 is known as the Great Commission. There is our new favorite prefix “co” again! In other words, God has invited all of His followers to pursue the mission of making disciples. We are to work together with Him making His mission, our mission.

If our mission is to make disciples, then how do we get started? The passage tells us to “go and make disciples.” This doesn’t mean we have to go across the world, even though some followers of Jesus do. It simply means as you move throughout your daily life, point people to Jesus. When you are at home, point people to Jesus. When you are at school, point people to Jesus. When you are at practice, point people to Jesus. When you are at work, point people to Jesus. When you are walking around your neighborhood, point people to Jesus.

John 13:34-35 sheds a little more light on how we point people to Jesus, “*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*”³⁵ *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*” The mission of making disciples begins with showing God’s love to the people you encounter. This often opens the door to point people to Jesus and help them take one step closer to God.

This mission might seem a little too great and make you feel a little hesitant. Remember, this is God’s mission and He is inviting us to collaborate and work with Him. He reminds us of this truth in Matthew 28:20b, “*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*”

CONVERSATION:

A disciple is simply someone who follows. What’s something that you follow (social media influencers, bands, authors, sports teams, people, or trends)? Why?

Why do you think God wants us to collaborate and be partners with Him in the mission to make disciples?

What does it look like to point people to Jesus in your life (school, work, friends, etc...)?

Disciple making is helping someone learn to follow Jesus. If you were to share why you follow Jesus with a friend, what would you say?

Is there someone in your life you can help take a step closer to God?

PRAYER:

Together as a family, thank God for His invitation to be a part of His mission to make more disciples. Ask God to help your family continue growing in His love, and for opportunities to point people to Jesus.

SESSION 2

CONNECTING
TO CHRIST





Have you ever said or done something and immediately thought, “I just turned into my mom or dad.” Or maybe it’s the other way around and you saw something in your kids and thought, “they are turning into me.” Whether we like it or not, kids reflect their parents. Often they behave, talk, and develop similar character/personalities. The reason this happens is because of proximity. Kids are around their parents so much that they naturally follow their example, whether they realize it or not.

The same is true for us as children of God. The more you spend time with God, the more you reflect His character and His ways. It’s like a sponge; it has to be in the water to absorb it. If we are not in proximity to God, we will not absorb His character and His fruit of the Spirit. When a sponge is squeezed, whatever it has absorbed will come out. So, we all have to ask the question, “What have I been absorbing?”

Jesus illustrates this truth in John 15:4-5 (NLT) saying, *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.”*⁵ *‘Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.’* There is power in being in proximity to our Heavenly Father. As branches, there is purposeful transformation and growth in remaining attached to the tree. In other words, when we connect to Jesus everything changes.

This connection is not a one time thing. Acknowledging Jesus as Savior connects us to Him and living with Him as our Lord keeps us connected. The main thing God wants to do with your life has nothing to do with achievements or accomplishments. It has everything to do with the person He wants you to become. This begins with connecting and continues with staying connected. Along the way, we may just start acting like our Heavenly Father. We may just start to see Him reflected in our lives.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

John 15:1-11

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

DAY 1 | WHAT'S MY PRIORITY?

by Rick Vieira

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."
Matthew 6:33

Priorities! Few things lead us astray faster than misguided priorities! We may think we have our priorities in order, but then look at where we spend our time or money only to realize our priorities are not where they should be.

What does the Bible say about priorities? Look no further than the Great Commandment. We find this in Matthew 22:36-40 when one of the Pharisees asked Jesus (v. 36), *"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"* Jesus replied:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (v. 37-40)

From these commandments and a closer study of the Scriptures, a clear hierarchy of priorities emerge. The Greek word for "neighbor" found in (v. 39) is *plesion*. It is a derivative of the Greek word *pelas*, which means "near." So a correct understanding of the word **neighbor means not just anyone that lives physically close to us, but includes anyone near to us** (family, friends, fellow believers, co-workers, etc...). With this understanding, we can look at other scriptures and learn what our priorities should be based on those that are nearest to us:

Genesis 2:24 tells us that *"a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."* Therefore, after our relationship with God, there can be no higher relationship than with our spouse as the two become one.

If at one point we are to "leave" our parents, our relationship with our children must take priority over our relationship with our parents (and other family members) as we *"train up a child in the way he should go..."* Proverbs 22:6 (ESV).

This leaves the next priority being others near to us such as fellow believers, co-workers, neighbors, etc. However, the Bible is clear that among these others, our first priority should be to fellow believers. Galatians 6:10 tells us to *"...do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."*

As you connect yourself to Christ, keep these priorities in mind:

1. God	2. Family	3. Others	4. Occupation or Recreation
	(starting with our spouse, then children, then parents, then other family members)	(starting with fellow believers)	

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Are there areas in your life (work, recreation, friendships, or family) where your time and attention show that your priorities may be out of order? What changes can you make to realign your priorities?

One way we often get our priorities out of order is by putting material things (bigger house, newer car, nicer clothes, or the latest gadgets) above our relationship with God and others. To afford these things, we may work long hours or take extra jobs, sacrificing time to grow our relationships with God or loved ones. Without realizing it, our priorities can easily become misaligned. How have you struggled with this mindset of priorities and material things?

DAY 2 | REPENTING

by Rick Vieira

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

James 4:7-10

These sound like very harsh words from God as James lays them out here, but let’s dive a bit deeper. Verses of scripture taken out of context can be dangerous. Does God really want us to continually grieve, mourn, and wail? Does He want us to no longer laugh, but to mourn? Does He want us to no longer have joy, but gloom? If we know the Bible well enough to truly understand the character of God, we would know this is not the case.

However, the key to understanding James 4:7-10 may be found in the verses just prior. James 4:4-6 shows us that God is saying our reaction to sin in our lives, to our “friendship with the world” (v. 4) should be grief, mourning, and wailing. It should **not** be laughter or joy. **Sin is a serious matter that separates us from God for eternity if we do not repent!**

Knowing this, **we should truly understand what it means to repent.** According to Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary (that differs from our more modern dictionaries in that it gives a theological definition of words as well), repent means “to sorrow or be pained for sin, as a violation of God’s holy law.”³

On this topic, 19th century British preacher Charles Spurgeon says, “If you do not submit to God you never will resist the devil, and you will remain constantly under his tyrannical power. Which shall be your master, God or devil, for one of these must? No man is without a master.”⁴

There is good news when we show genuine sorrow and pain for sinning against God. James 4:6 says that, “*He (God) gives us more grace*” and “*shows favor to the humble.*” **Repenting and humbly turning away from our sin yields God’s grace and favor in our lives.** If you feel you have not truly repented of your sins, current or past, pray this prayer unto the Lord:

“Lord, I have sinned and fallen short. I turn from my wrongs, and ask for Your mercy. Cleanse my heart, renew my spirit, and lead me in Your truth. I trust in Christ alone for forgiveness of my sins. Help me walk in obedience and love. In Jesus’ name, amen!”

As you connect yourself to Christ, let this prayer be your guide.

³ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828).

⁴ David Guzik, *Enduring Word Bible Commentary*, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/james-4/>.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Have you ever been guilty of glorifying your past sinful life? Have you told stories of all the things you used to do with a certain amount of humor, recounting how fun that season of your life was? What have you learned about how God may feel about this? What is the danger of remembering your sinful past with joy?

How can you find the balance between showing genuine repentance for your sins (healthy) and not wallowing in your past failures (unhealthy)? At what point do you know that you have shown true repentance?

DAY 3 | WORSHIPPING

by Rick Vieira

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2:9-11

Our connection to Christ cannot be complete without getting on our knees before Him in worship and adoration! We can read about His miracles, acknowledge Him as our Savior, pray in His name, and even tell others about Him. Yet, true connection to Christ means we also lose ourselves in worshipping His glory.

Webster's 1828 American Dictionary **defines worship this way: "to adore; to pay divine honors to, to reverence with supreme respect, to honor with extravagant love and extreme submission."**⁵

We often think of the act of worship as singing praises to the Lord before we hear the message each week at church. The beauty of the instrumentation, the message in the lyrics, and the power of the vocals certainly help usher in a spirit of worship. However, while this is and likely should be an important part of worshipping the Lord, **worship itself is so much more than just this!** Here are several other ways we can honor the Lord with "extravagant love and extreme submission:"

In our prayer life, as our prayers turn to passionate longings to hear from God and draw closer to Him (John 4:23-24).

In our giving, as we give of our tithes and offerings "cheerfully" (2 Corinthians 9:7) and with "glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:46).

In our serving, Jesus says that when we serve others, we serve Him (Matthew 25:40).

In how we love others (1 John 4:21).

The Psalms are a collection of 150 songs that were written over the course of nearly 1,000 years. They are full of worship and adoration to the Lord for His goodness, mercy, provision, and protection. Let our adoration of the Lord our God be as passionate today as it was for David and many others all those years ago:

- "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; **worship** the Lord in the splendor of his holiness." Psalm 29:2
- "Come, let us bow down in **worship**, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Psalm 95:6
- "Exalt the Lord our God and **worship** at his footstool; he is holy" Psalm 99:5
- "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. **Worship** the Lord with gladness..." Psalm 100:1-2a

CONNECT WITH CHRIST IN A NEW AND POWERFUL WAY BY WORSHIPPING HIM AS NEVER BEFORE!

⁵ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828).

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Have you felt as if your worship has been limited to three songs at a church service? In what other ways can you fully and totally worship the Lord?

In these forms of worship: giving, serving, praying for and loving others, which area can you make some changes to worship in a new way?

DAY 4 | REMAINING

by Dr. Jamie Shockley-Owens

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

John 15:1-8

In John 15, Jesus invites His followers into one of the most intimate and essential aspects of the Christian life: remaining or abiding in Him. This image of the vine and branches captures what it truly means to live in connection with Christ. The branch has no life apart from the vine. It draws everything, nourishment, strength, and vitality, from that connection. In the same way, **our spiritual health depends on our continual connection to Jesus.**

To "remain" means to stay, to dwell, **to be rooted.** It's not a fleeting visit but an ongoing relationship, and one that shapes our thoughts, decisions, and desires. Jesus doesn't call us to produce fruit on our own. Instead, He calls us to stay close to Him so that His life flows through us. The fruit, love, joy, peace, patience, and all that reflects His nature, grows naturally out of that abiding connection.

Yet remaining in Christ takes intentionality. We are constantly pulled toward distraction, independence, and self-reliance. We drift when we neglect prayer, Scripture, or worship. Remaining requires slowing down, making space to listen, and keeping our hearts tuned to His presence throughout the day.

Do you notice how easily your patience and joy can fade away when in the middle of a busy season in life? Personally, I have realized when I do not spend **DAILY** time in His Word, I become more reliant on my own strength. Spending even ten minutes a day in Scripture and silence, my peace returns. Challenges do not disappear, but my perspective changes. **Like a phone reconnected to its charger, I can draw strength from my source again.** Remaining in Jesus isn't about perfection, it's about daily connection that keeps our hearts alive.

Jesus also reminds us that the Father, the gardener, lovingly prunes us removing what hinders our growth. Though pruning can be uncomfortable, it refines us, deepens our dependence on Christ, and prepares us to bear more fruit. In those moments of trimming and refining, **God is not rejecting us but nurturing us.** He knows the beauty that comes when we fully rely on Him.

Remaining in Christ means choosing **daily communion over occasional connection.** It's waking each morning with the simple prayer, "Lord, help me stay connected to You today." It's trusting that when we abide in Him, our lives will overflow with purpose, peace, and fruit that endures.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

What practices or rhythms help you stay connected and “remain” in Christ throughout your day?

Where might God be inviting you to let go of distractions or habits that keep you from abiding fully in Him?

DAY 5 | OBEYING

by Elise Clift

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love." I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

John 15:9-11

Jesus does not separate love and obedience. He connects them in a way that shows us obedience is not about control, but about our relationship. **To obey Jesus is to stay close to Him and to trust that His way is better than ours.**

Jesus obeyed His Father because of His deep love for Him. Everything He did, from healing the sick to dying on the cross, came from that love. When He invites us to obey, He is inviting us into that same kind of relationship.

OBEEDIENCE BECOMES AN ACT OF LOVE AND TRUST, NOT A RULE TO FOLLOW.

When Jesus says that keeping His commands allows us to remain in His love, He is showing us that His instructions are not meant to limit us, but to protect us. His commands keep us grounded and guide us toward joy. The joy He speaks of is not temporary happiness that fades when life gets hard. It is a deep, lasting joy that comes from knowing we are walking in step with Him.

Sometimes obedience feels difficult because it means surrendering our own desires and timing. We might not understand why God asks us to take certain steps, forgive someone who hurt us, or wait for something we long for. But obedience often leads to blessings that only make sense later. Like a seed planted in the soil, our obedience may seem hidden for a while, but growth is happening beneath the surface.

Every command Jesus gives comes from His love for us. He tells us to forgive so that we can live free from bitterness. He calls us to give so that we can experience the joy of generosity. He teaches us to love others so that we can reflect His heart to the world. **When obedience flows from love, it no longer feels heavy. It becomes an expression of faith and freedom.**

When we choose to obey, we are not earning God's love. We are responding to the love He already gave us. The more we trust Him, the more our hearts begin to align with His. Obedience leads to joy, and that joy deepens our connection with Christ.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

How does seeing obedience as a relationship instead of rules change how you follow Jesus?

What is one area in your life where God is calling you to obey, even when it feels uncomfortable?

SESSION 2 | GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GET STARTED

“Connecting” is going to come up a lot in this study. **What is your preferred way to “connect” with someone: over coffee, an email, a call, or a text? Why?**

One way we connect with Christ is in our worship. **What is your favorite worship song? Explain why that song resonates with you.**

New Groups: *Getting To Know You* activity (pg. 130)

TAKE IT IN

Watch Session 2: Connecting To Christ at mynorthside.com/ctu.

What encouraged or challenged you from the video and daily study guide this week?

TALK IT OVER

One definition of connecting is “joining or linking things together, especially as to provide access and communication.”⁶ We join or link ourselves with others in different ways: by working together, spending time with people, and in our conversations. All of these give others a certain access to ourselves. **Who are the top three people you spend time with in any of the mentioned ways? How has society made it difficult for God or family to be higher on this list?**

Read John 4:23-24

Worshipping is an important part of connecting with the Lord. These verses in the book of John talk about worshipping the Father in “spirit and truth,” meaning we will worship with our whole heart while obeying the laws and commands of scriptures. **What might be keeping you from fully worshipping the Lord? Are you only worshipping in certain places, like church? Could a lack of understanding of the Bible’s truths be holding you back? Discuss ways you might be limiting your worship.**

Repenting is an important, and even a necessary, part of how to connect with Christ. Acts 3:19a (ESV) says that we should “*Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out...*” This suggests that there are times we need to reverse course from the direction we are heading. **How do you feel your life and/or faith**

⁶ Oxford Dictionary of English, Oxford University Press, 2025.

might be heading in the wrong direction, or maybe just feeling stuck right now? What are some ways you can start heading in the right direction or get unstuck?

Remaining in Christ means choosing daily communion over occasional connection. One way to stay connected to Christ is thinking about it like we do eating and drinking daily. Going an entire day without eating and/or drinking would be an extremely difficult task for any of us. The same should be true for our connection to Christ. **Would you say your relationship with Jesus is better categorized as “daily” or “occasionally?” Do you turn to Him only when you need something, or do you rely on Him daily to meet your needs?** Be honest with yourself and transparent with your group as you consider these questions.

LIVE IT OUT

Obedience to the Lord is another way we stay connected to Him. However, obedience has become a negative word in our culture that often promotes self-reliance and individual freedom. **Spend some time talking about the benefits of Godly obedience and/or the dangers of individual freedom. Wrap up by each stating out loud what changes you can make to be more obedient to Christ.** As a group pray over all the ways you are planning to pursue connecting to Christ.

Daily Devotions: Take 15-30 minutes each day to dive into the *Connecting The Unconnected* daily devotions. Don't think of it as homework, but time growing alongside your Heavenly Father. Come ready to discuss what you are learning at the next group session.

Memorize: “*But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him.*” **1 John 2:5**

SESSION 2 | FAMILY CONVERSATIONS

These family conversations are designed to help you create moments to talk about God and faith in your family. We want to encourage you to carve out a moment each week to read and discuss each family conversation. This could be over the dinner table, before bedtime, or whenever works best for your family. In each family conversation, you will find four parts.

Scripture: Read the passage out loud, or encourage a family member to read.	Devotion: Read this to your family.	Conversation: Pick and choose what questions are best for your family to discuss.	Prayer: Pray for your family or encourage a family member to pray.
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Just as a heads-up, things probably won't go as planned with your family conversations. Your family may interrupt, someone probably won't pay attention, and there may not be any grand spiritual moments. What matters most is that you are seeking God as a family. Faith in your family is more often caught than taught. Your family will most likely forget these devotions, but they will remember the intentionality and time together. That will set the stage for you to model faith and continue building a spiritual legacy in your family.

SCRIPTURE:

“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 2:38

DEVOTION:

Have you ever watched someone get baptized at church and wondered, “what is that all about?” Baptism is an important step in the journey of every follower of Jesus. Acts 2:38 gives us a clear picture of why it matters. When Peter spoke to the crowd, he invited them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Becoming a Christ follower is a decision made in your heart when you understand that He died on a cross to save you from your sins. Repent means to turn around and go the other way. It is asking forgiveness for sin, and making the decision to follow Jesus. The act of baptism is a public declaration of your faith, showing that you've decided to follow Jesus.

Do you want to know a secret? The water in the baptistry at church isn't special. There's no secret sauce or pixie dust. The power of baptism comes from heaven not the faucet. You could get baptized in a river, lake, pool, or ocean. It's not about the water, it's about what the water represents. Baptism is like a bridge that connects

us to God. It symbolizes the washing away of our sins and the beginning of a new life in Christ. When you're baptized, you're saying, "I belong to Jesus, and I want to follow Him."

Baptism is also a reenactment of what Jesus did for us through His death, burial, and resurrection. When you go under the water you are saying that since Jesus died and was buried for me, I am going to die to myself and make Him my Lord. When you come up out of the water, you are showing that you are receiving the gift of a new life and the Holy Spirit as your guide. Have you ever heard the term born again? We don't actually start our lives over as babies. But, through faith and the step of baptism, we start a new life with God as the King of our lives.

Baptism is just the beginning. It is the starting line, not the finish line, of our faith journey. Our faith through baptism connects us to God so that we can have a relationship with Him. Just like any relationship, it needs attention to grow. To stay connected to God means spending time with Him every day: reading the Bible, worshiping, and praying. It also means being part of a church community where you can learn more about God and serve others.

Baptism is a next step for every follower of Jesus. It's a chance to show everyone that you are committed to Jesus. It's a chance to follow Jesus' example, because he was baptized too (Matthew 3:13-17). It is also an invitation to live a life immersed in following Jesus.

CONVERSATION:

If you have been baptized, talk about your faith story. Share how you placed your faith in Jesus Christ and took the step of baptism.

How does baptism symbolize a new life in Christ, and what changes might you see in someone who follows Jesus?

Why is it important to publicly declare your faith through baptism? How can this impact your relationship with God and others?

In what ways can we celebrate baptism in our family?

If you are thinking about getting baptized, what questions do you have? How can we seek out answers as a family?

PRAYER:

As a family, give thanks to God for the death and resurrection of Jesus. It's through Jesus that everyone can receive forgiveness and have a relationship with God. Ask God to work in your lives to draw you closer to Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide each member of your family to a saving faith in Jesus that culminates in the step of baptism.

SESSION 3

CONNECTING OTHERS
TO CHRIST





What is your favorite product? It could be a household item, the makers of your favorite ice cream, a brand of clothing, or an electronic device. What is it about the item that makes it your favorite? Why do you keep coming back to it? More importantly, do you tell others about it? Do you encourage them to try it out or incorporate it into their own lives? When we encounter something that brings value to our lives, we often share it with others. This ranges from a product, to a restaurant, to a TV show. Many times we share these recommendations because we want to help bring that same value to the lives of others.

There is nothing more satisfying, more life changing, and more valuable than the Gospel or Good News of Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ we are...

Forgiven Colossians 2:13-14	Children of God Galatians 3:26	Reconciled 2 Corinthians 5:17-20	Justified Romans 5:1
Accepted Romans 15:7	Redeemed Romans 3:24	Made Complete Colossians 2:9-10	Adopted Galatians 4:4-7
Delivered Colossians 1:13-14	Brought Near Ephesians 2:13	Citizens Of Heaven Philippians 3:20	Part Of A New Kingdom Colossians 1:13
Given An Inheritance 1 Peter 1:3-4	In A Relationship with God Hebrews 4:14-16	A Chosen People 1 Peter 2:9	Blessed Ephesians 1:3

The list could keep going. It takes a lifetime to begin to grasp the impact of Jesus Christ in our lives. Our mission is to connect unconnected people to the greatest news and person in Jesus Christ. But, for something and someone so valuable to us, we often have trouble sharing Jesus with others. We often run into roadblocks within ourselves about knowing the right information or using the right words. What if it was less about knowing the right things and more about a willingness to share? The Holy Spirit longs to work in everyone's life. He is calling us to be satisfied customers and share with others what we have learned from following Jesus. After that, He will do the work that only He can.

"He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"²⁶ Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"²⁷ He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"²⁸ Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

John 9:25-29

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."

Romans 1:16

"So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow...⁹For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building."

I Corinthians 3:7, 9

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect"

I Peter 3:15



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

DAY 1 | COVERED IN GRACE

by Roy Roberson

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Hebrews 4:14-16

Have you ever heard it said that you can't give away what you don't have? Makes sense, right? You first have to possess something and recognize it as yours before you can give it to someone else. One of the greatest responsibilities of a Christian is to invite others to know Jesus and receive His mercy and amazing grace. But until you realize what you have, you can't share it with someone else.

Those two words...Mercy...Grace, they're the quintessential elements of the Gospel. Mercy means exemption from punishment.

Grace means favor and blessing we don't deserve. Preacher and Author Max Lucado said, "God answers the mess of my life with one word: grace."⁷

Let those two words, mercy and grace, live in your heart for a moment. Say them out loud. Write them down and let them roll in your mind over and over until you realize once again how blessed you are to have received what only God can give.

Mercy and Grace. They go together and are offered to us by God, so that we may be saved. Ephesians 2:4-5 reminds us, *"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."*

Jesus created a way for you to be saved when there was no way. He is the **"great high priest."** He lived as we live and was tempted as we are, but He never sinned. He remained pure and spotless. Therefore, He now sits on a **"throne of grace"** inviting us to approach Him with **"confidence"** to **"receive mercy"** and find the grace we so desperately need.

When you accept God's mercy and grace through Jesus, you agree with God that you can't earn His favor. **God doesn't require you to be good or do good to be saved, but to rest in His goodness and love.** In that rest, you find salvation, joy, and peace. Accepting that you're covered by His mercy and grace is life-changing and provides the pathway to transformation in the name of Jesus.

Inviting others to receive the mercy and grace of Jesus starts with truly understanding you are covered in His grace because of His amazing love. Reflect on this question today, how have you experienced His mercy and grace in your life?

⁷ Max Lucado, *Grace: More Than We Deserve, Greater Than We Imagine* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 7.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

How does knowing that Jesus was tempted in every way and never sinned affect, impact, and/or change your relationship with Him?

What are some times in your life when God has shown mercy to you (when He exempted you from punishment)? What are some times when He has shown grace to you (given undeserved favor and blessing)?

DAY 2 | ADOPTED INTO A FAMILY

by Roy Roberson

"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir."

Galatians 4:4-7

Adopted. **That word means someone is chosen.** Chosen with love to be part of a family and given all the rights and privileges of living in that family. Being adopted is a journey that holds the power to transform the life of the person chosen.

This passage shows us the process by which we were adopted into God's family. At just the right time, God sent Jesus, His Son, to be born in Bethlehem to the Virgin Mary. Paul reminds us that Jesus was fully God, but also fully man.

While Jesus was subject to the law of God, He came for the purpose of buying our freedom so we could be set free from the law that brought sin and death (**see Romans 8:1-2**).

You see, in the time of Christ, there were about 6 million slaves in the Roman Empire alone. A man could buy a slave and keep him as his own, or he could buy a slave and set him free. As slaves to sin, **Jesus came and bought us with the price of His life** and blood on the cross. He redeemed (bought) us so that we might live freely under God's grace and become children of God.

As children of God, we are heirs... heirs with Christ. God the Father sent the Son to die for us, and God the Son sent His Spirit to live in us. The Spirit of God living in us means we are legitimate children of God with all the rights, privileges, and benefits of a true son or daughter.

Here are a few of the benefits:

Children have the same nature as the father. We "share his divine nature" (**2 Peter 1:4 NLT**) because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Children of God are rich. We are both children and "heirs." We don't have to wait to draw our inheritance. We can start receiving God's riches of grace, mercy, goodness, and wisdom now!

Children have a future. In one sense our adoption isn't quite final. We are still awaiting the return of Christ. But, if we pass from this earth before He comes, our future is eternal, waiting for us in Heaven (**see John 14:1-4**).

Realizing you're adopted into God's family brings joy, hope, peace, and promise! God's house has enough room for many more. Who would you like to invite to know Jesus?

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

How does being fully adopted into God's family affect your outlook and way of life? Reflect on the benefits of being in God's family and then write about the blessings you know you have as a child of God.

Who would you like to invite to know Jesus? Write a prayer that this person's heart will be open to the Spirit of God.

DAY 3 | OUR JOB IS TO PLANT

by Roy Roberson

"What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task.⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.⁹ For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building."

1 Corinthians 3:5-9

Gardening is a great reminder of the power of God to make things grow. We do our part. We till the soil. We plant the seed at the right time of year. We provide water to make sure the plant gets the goodness it needs. We probably even pray for a good result and a great harvest. **But, at the end of the day, it's God who makes the seed grow.**

Agricultural images are common in the New Testament. Jesus compared the human heart to soil and God's Word to seed. Do you remember the story? A farmer went out to sow his seed. Some of the seed fell on the path, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on the rocky places where there wasn't much soil. The seed came up quickly, but the soil was

shallow and the seed didn't last in the hot sun. Some fell among the thorns which grew up and choked out the plants. But, some fell on good soil and the harvest was a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown.

You can go back and read **Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23** to grasp the deeper meaning. But don't miss this part. **The farmer spread the seed wildly.** The seed went everywhere. He wasn't careful about where the seed went. The connection? **In our little corner of the world, we should sow and plant the seed wildly.** We don't need to pre-determine who we share the love of God and the Gospel with daily and weekly. We just need to share the Word (a.k.a. plant), be loving people, water the seed with our prayers, and trust God with the rest.

We're called to be servants like Apollos and Paul, do our job faithfully, and trust God with the rest. God will give life to our efforts. Sometimes we plant, someone else waters, and someone else gets to be there when the person accepts Christ and is baptized. Sometimes, someone else does the planting and watering, and we get to receive their profession of faith and baptize them. The key is, it's not about us... it's about God. We are co-workers for the Lord.

God wants us to do our part. He will do His and the seed that takes root will result in a great harvest!

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Some Christians are hesitant to share their faith because they feel pressure to do it perfectly. How does knowing God is the one who “makes things grow” impact your willingness to share your faith with others?

The parable in Matthew 13 describes a farmer “wildly” sowing the seed. What can you do to spread your faith wildly in your own corner of the world?

DAY 4 | THE HOLY SPIRIT'S JOB IS TO GROW US

by Rachel Hollensead

"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

John 14:26

"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Philippians 1:6

In John 14, Jesus spoke these words to His disciples on the night before He fixed His eyes on the cross. They were anxious and uncertain about what would happen once He was gone. **In that moment, Jesus promised them something extraordinary, the gift of the Holy Spirit.** He would not leave them as orphans but would send a divine Helper to teach, guide, and remind them of truth.

The word "Helper" in Greek is *Paraklētos*, and means one who comes alongside to encourage, comfort, and advocate. The Holy Spirit isn't a distant unknowable force;

He's a personal presence living within every believer, teaching us God's truth through scripture and reminding us of Jesus' words when we need them most.

Consider the moments when a verse suddenly comes to mind right when you need it for peace, conviction, or direction. That's not a coincidence; that is the Holy Spirit at work. Just as He did for the disciples, He continues to illuminate God's Word for us today, transforming what we read into living truth that shapes our hearts and actions.

Think of someone who is learning to play an instrument. At first, they rely heavily on instruction, sheet music, and feedback for correction. But over time, the music becomes part of them, and they hear it, feel it, and respond almost instinctively. In the same way, the more time we spend in God's Word, the Holy Spirit works in us to make the teachings of Christ part of who we are. **He trains our minds to remember and our hearts to respond.**

The promise of John 14:26 reminds us that we're never left to figure out faith alone. The same Spirit who taught the disciples and guided Jesus is alive in us today. He is our divine Helper, teaching and reminding us daily how to walk in truth.

The promise of Philippians 1:6 is that the Holy Spirit has started a good work in our lives that is filled with purpose. His job is to grow us and we can trust that He will continue His work of guiding us to live connected to Jesus.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

When has the Holy Spirit brought a specific scripture or truth to your mind at just the right time?

What might the Holy Spirit be trying to teach you right now? How can you be more attentive to the Holy Spirit's guidance in your daily life?

DAY 5 | YOUR STORY OF LIFE CHANGE

by John Konkler

"As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"³ "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him..."⁶ After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.⁷ "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing..."²⁴ A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."²⁵ He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

John 9:1-3, 6-7, 24-25

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be **physically blind**, to never fully see what others describe, to miss the beauty of colors, shapes, and details around you? Now imagine being able to see with your eyes but still being **spiritually blind**. You move through life unaware of God's presence, unable to recognize His blessings or His work around you. Then one day, the Holy Spirit touches your life. Suddenly, your spiritual eyes are opened. You begin to see God's hand moving in ways you never noticed before.

There was once a single parent, struggling to make ends meet while raising several children. The oldest son played in the high school band and his group had been given the opportunity to perform at Disney World. The cost of the trip was \$400, an amount they simply didn't have. They prayed, asking God to provide. A few days later, the son went out to check the mail, and found a wallet. It had no identification, but it contained the exact amount of money they had been praying for! They immediately turned the wallet over to the sheriff, who held it for several weeks to see if anyone would claim it. The week before the money was due, the sheriff called. Since no one had come forward, he said the money rightfully belonged to the son. **God had answered their prayer in an incredible way!**

As Christmas approached, they again prayed for God's provision. That very weekend, there was a knock at the door. A friend stood there holding an envelope with money to purchase all the Christmas gifts they needed. It was a deeply humbling moment—a powerful reminder that **God is faithful**.

But there's more. One of the daughters received frightening news: she had a tumor on her pituitary gland that would require surgery. Once again, the family turned to prayer, pleading for God to show His power. As the surgery date approached, the doctors ordered one final MRI. To everyone's complete shock, the tumor was completely gone! God had healed her.

In the busyness of life, it's easy to miss the blessings God pours out on us. Sometimes, our spiritual blindness keeps us from recognizing how He is working to draw us closer to Him and bring glory to His name. My prayer for you today is that God will **open your spiritual eyes** so you can clearly see His hand at work in your life, just as He has done in mine.

You see, **I was that single parent**. And now, by God's grace, **I can see**.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Think of a time(s) that God has worked in your life. In what ways did God provide or bless you? How can you share the stories of God working in your life with others?

Have you ever considered how God could use you to be an answer to someone else's prayer? In what ways would you be open to God using you to help someone else?

SESSION 3 | GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GET STARTED

Do you have a favorite product, restaurant, or business you love and tell people about? Why?

Think back on your personal journey with Jesus. **How did it all start? Who was the person that shared the Gospel with you? What was said that caused you to respond?**

New Groups: *Getting To Know You* activity (pg. 130)

TAKE IT IN

Watch Session 3: Connecting Others to Christ at mynorthside.com/ctu.

What encouraged or challenged you from the video and daily study guide this week?

TALK IT OVER

Read John 9:1-12; 24-25

We know from the passage that this man was born blind (v.1) and was a beggar (v.8). **How do you think this man's life was changed after regaining his sight (mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc...)? How does a person's life change after they start following Jesus?**

The video presented a couple reasons Christians feel uncomfortable sharing their faith.

- Sometimes you may feel like you don't have enough Biblical knowledge.
- Sometimes you may think you're too shy or introverted.

Which reason resonates with you? Can you think of any other reasons, if so share them with the group? How can you become more comfortable sharing your faith with others?

Jesus told his disciples the man was born blind, "*so that the works of God might be displayed in him*" (v. 3). Where the disciples saw a curse, Jesus saw an opportunity. **What do you learn from Jesus' compassion towards the man who was born blind? How does this change the way you see people? How does it change the way you view difficult circumstances?**

Read John 4:27-42

The 'Woman at the Well' is the story of a woman who had a bad reputation and was still loved by Jesus. When Jesus revealed who He was, she ran to town excited and told everyone about her meeting. **Share about a time when you got so excited about something God did that you shared it with someone (friend, family, work, social media, etc...).**

The disciples went to town and brought back food (John 4:8; 27; & 31). After talking to Jesus, the woman went to town and brought back the town. **What hinders you from being**

excited about the things God has done and/or is doing in your life? How can you cultivate a sense of awe and excitement when it comes to your relationship with God?

In John 4:34–38, Jesus uses the image of a farmer sowing and reaping to describe His mission. His conversation with the woman at the well helped bring about a spiritual harvest.

Where do you see God giving you opportunities to take part in a spiritual harvest (connecting people to Jesus or helping others live connected to Jesus)?

In the video, we're reminded that outreach is a process rather than an event. **What does that mean? How does thinking of outreach/evangelism as a process take some of the pressure off of you as the one sharing the Gospel?**

Some Christians think it's enough to share their faith by just how they live. A witness, by definition, tells people about what they saw or what happened to them. **How do the ideas from the video make it easier for you to open up and share Jesus with people in your life?**

LIVE IT OUT

There's no question that connecting others to Jesus can be uncomfortable at times. But, the call of God in our lives is to do just that. As Romans 1:16a says, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes..."* How we step into the challenge of connecting people to Jesus reveals the power of the Gospel in our lives. **Where or how is God calling you to share your faith with others? What about our group?** Ask God to give you the courage to share Jesus or to demonstrate His love through a kind act of service. As a group, pray for God to place people who need to know Jesus into each of your paths, to show you the right time to share your faith, and to give you the words to say.

Daily Devotions: Take 15-30 minutes each day to dive into the *Connecting The Unconnected* daily devotions. Don't think of it as homework, but time growing alongside your Heavenly Father. Come ready to discuss what you are learning at the next group session.

Memorize: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* **Acts 1:8**

Communion Experience: Discuss your plans to complete the Communion Experience during Session 4 (pg. 131)

SESSION 3 | FAMILY CONVERSATIONS

These family conversations are designed to help you create moments to talk about God and faith in your family. We want to encourage you to carve out a moment each week to read and discuss each family conversation. This could be over the dinner table, before bedtime, or whenever works best for your family. In each family conversation, you will find four parts.

Scripture: Read the passage out loud, or encourage a family member to read.	Devotion: Read this to your family.	Conversation: Pick and choose what questions are best for your family to discuss.	Prayer: Pray for your family or encourage a family member to pray.
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Just as a heads-up, things probably won't go as planned with your family conversations. Your family may interrupt, someone probably won't pay attention, and there may not be any grand spiritual moments. What matters most is that you are seeking God as a family. Faith in your family is more often caught than taught. Your family will most likely forget these devotions, but they will remember the intentionality and time together. That will set the stage for you to model faith and continue building a spiritual legacy in your family.

SCRIPTURE:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
Acts 1:8

DEVOTION:

When people decide to accept Jesus as the Savior and Lord of their lives, God gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the promise Jesus makes to His followers in Acts 1:8 and it's for us today too! The Holy Spirit is God's presence within us, helping us to live out our faith. Think of the Holy Spirit as a close friend who is always there to guide, comfort, and empower you. When we invite the Holy Spirit into our lives, we receive the strength and courage we need to live for Jesus and share His love with others.

While the Holy Spirit can speak audibly to you, more often He provides a certain gut instinct that has more to do with your heart. Have you ever found yourself thinking about a friend or family member all day, only to discover later that they were sick or facing difficulties? That could have been the Holy Spirit prompting you to pray. Or perhaps you've been on the playground and felt a gentle nudge to reach out to a kid

playing alone? That's likely the Holy Spirit guiding you. Have you ever been deeply moved by a song or a sermon? That too might be the Holy Spirit speaking to your heart.

The Holy Spirit transforms our lives. He convicts us when we sin. He moves us to forgive others. He encourages us when we are sad. He strengthens us to do the right thing and live like Jesus. When we let Him work within us, He helps us connect others to Jesus.

Imagine a flashlight without batteries. No matter how much you push the button, it won't light up. But, when you put in the batteries, the flashlight shines brightly. The Holy Spirit is like the batteries in a flashlight. Without Him, we might feel powerless or unsure. With Him, we can shine brightly to those around us. We can have confidence because God is living in us.

Acts 1:8 encourages us to be witnesses sharing our faith and pointing people to Jesus. We cannot do that without the Holy Spirit. With Him, we can be shining lights in darkness. With Him, we can connect others to Jesus and help them grow to live in step with the Spirit.

CONVERSATION:

Do you have a story when you experienced a lot of darkness (power outage, cave, camping, etc...)? What was it like when you turned on a light in the darkness?

How does the illustration of the flashlight and batteries help you understand the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

Can you think of a time you felt a nudge to do something kind or helpful? Could that have been the Holy Spirit?

Can you think of a situation right now where you need extra strength or courage? How might the Holy Spirit help in such situations?

What can we do this week to stay more in tune with the Holy Spirit and let Him guide us?

PRAYER:

As a family, thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ask for help to rely on His power in your lives. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be present and ask for help recognizing the moments He nudges your family to live like Jesus. Finally, pray for the courage and the words to share the love of Jesus with others.

SESSION 4

CONNECTING
TO COMMUNITY





What are the essentials in our lives? We need food, water, and air to live. We need clothing and shelter to protect us from the elements. What if relationships are just as vital as these basic needs? What if, just as our bodies are designed to breathe, our souls are designed to thrive in community with others?

In Genesis, God creates everything, and declares it “good.” When it comes to humanity, God declares that we are “very good” (Genesis 1:31). The only “not good” in all of the creation story is found in Genesis 2:18a, *“The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone.’”* We are created by a God that does not and cannot exist outside of Community (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). By His design, to the core of who we are, we are created to be in relationships. We need community because God made us for it.

For more than 80+ years Harvard conducted a study on adult development. In this study, researchers followed a group of Harvard students and a group of boys from one of Boston’s poorest neighborhoods. They concluded that close relationships, more than money or fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives. They are better predictors of long and happy lives than social class, IQ, or even genes. Similarly, people who are more connected to family, to friends, and to community, were physically healthier than people who are less connected. In other words, good relationships help us live happier and healthier.⁸

It is always interesting when God and the secular world align. This 80+ year study proved what God designed us for. We are created for community, not only to connect with God, but also to build meaningful relationships with others. Embracing these connections is essential for our lives.

⁸ Robert Waldinger, *What Makes a Good Life? Lessons from the Longest Study on Happiness*. TED, Dec. 2015, www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness.

“Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

Genesis 1:26-27

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:¹⁰ If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?¹² Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:24-25



[illegible]

DAY 1 | MATURITY COMES FROM COMMUNITY

by Andy Clark

"He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.²⁹ To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me."

Colossians 1:28-29

What if the only way we accomplish the Great Commission of making disciples is by growing in community with others? It makes sense, because one person cannot make all the disciples. Also, discipleship is a two way street. We are called to both be discipled by someone while discipling others.

Reread the passage paying attention to the word "we." This passage **DOES NOT** say that the ministers, elders, or seasoned believers are solely responsible for presenting everyone mature in Christ. This passage says that **WE**, as followers of Jesus, have a responsibility to teach each other. Let that sink in for a moment. **We are all in this together.**

We cannot grow spiritually without connecting relationally. Jesus defined spiritual growth with two commands: love God and love others (Mark 12:29-31). You cannot love God and not love others. You cannot truly love others without the love of God. In community is where we learn how to love God and others because that is where we put it into practice.

Many times, we approach spiritual growth from a consumer mindset. What can I get out of this message, book, study, or group? While this is good, you will stop growing if you only stay here. The reason, it is all about you and your consumption. Contribution is where spiritual maturity begins to take shape. That is when what we consume is put into practice. This is the truth of Colossians 1:28, **helping other people grow in their faith helps you grow too.**

If spiritual growth and the shift from consumers to contributors happens in community, then maturity happens in community. This leads us to Colossians 1:29, *"To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me."* What energy are you putting into maturing your faith? Is that energy spent only in isolation, or with others? The good news from this passage is that Christ is working to move us towards maturity. That might be the best reason to be a part of a community of believers. **When you spend time with other believers, you experience the work of Christ in each individual person.** This not only reveals the bigness of the God we follow, but the small intentional heart work He is doing. If you want to experience the work of Christ, spend time in a community of believers. The work that He is doing in your life and others will lead you towards spiritual maturity together.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Do you approach your spiritual journey with a consumer mindset, focusing on what you can gain, or a contributor mindset, focusing on how you can help others? What are the benefits or both? What is a next step you can take to shift towards being more of a contributor?

Reflect on a time when you experienced the work of Christ through interactions with other believers. How did this experience contribute to your spiritual maturity?

DAY 2 | COMMUNITY PRODUCES FRUIT

by Andy Clark

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)

Way back on Day 3 of Session 1, we defined **obedience as a habit of grace in developing godly character**. Godly character is growing in the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Growing disciples are not measured by how much they know, but by who they are becoming.

If you want to know if you are growing as a disciple, start paying attention to how the fruit of the Spirit is being produced in your life.

Am I becoming a more loving person?	Am I becoming a more joyful person?	Am I becoming a more peace filled person?	Am I becoming a more patient person?	Am I becoming a more kindness filled person?
Am I becoming a more goodness filled person?	Am I becoming a more faithful person?	Am I becoming a more gentle person?	Am I becoming a more self controlled person?	

You cannot read those questions without being challenged! This is not meant to discourage, and remember there is grace. The work of the Holy Spirit in your life is to produce fruit and transform your life to be more like Jesus.

Developing godly character takes time. In fact, it takes a lifetime. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:22-24 (NLT), “...throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.” This process of throwing off and putting on is a daily decision, often moment by moment. It is less about performance and more about who we are becoming.

Developing godly character takes community. Every fruit of the Spirit is relational. That means we need to be in relationships in order to experience or exhibit them. Community is where we learn, practice, and develop the fruit of the Spirit. Relationships with our family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and sometimes strangers create the space to develop godly character.

What fruit has the Holy Spirit produced and/or what is He producing in your life? Prayerfully celebrate all the work He has been up to. Do not be discouraged about the work still left to go. If you want to see more fruit produced in your life, seek out community with others. Community is where we practice obedience, and obedience is what produces fruit.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Reflect back on the nine questions on the fruit of the Spirit. How have you seen the fruit of the Spirit produced in your life this past year, month, or week? As you write, take time to celebrate God in each instance.

Reflect on a recent situation where you had to “throw off” your old nature and “put on” your new nature in Christ. How did this experience contribute to your spiritual growth and development of godly character?

DAY 3 | COMMUNITY IS A TASTE OF HEAVEN

by Andy Clark

“and this was his purpose: that when the time is ripe he will gather us all together from wherever we are—in heaven or on earth—to be with him in Christ forever.”

Ephesians 1:10 (TLB)

Have you ever thought about what heaven will be like? Heaven is a place of “no mores.” There will be no more tears, no more pain, and no more sorrow. There will be no more separation, because we will be in the full presence of our Savior and Lord (Revelation 21:1-5).

There will also be no more isolation because **we will not be alone in Heaven.**

“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”

Revelation 7:9

Heaven is eternity with God and with others. What if God designed us for community with other believers so that we could experience a taste of eternity right now?

Community is a place to love and be loved.	Community is a place to encourage and be encouraged.	Community is a place to comfort and be comforted.
Community is a place to carry and have your burdens carried.	Community is a place to grow and help others grow.	Community is a place to give grace and receive grace.

In a healthy community of believers we get to experience the beginning of what it is like to have “no mores.” While the real thing will be better than we can ever imagine, hope and God’s presence can be found when we are intentional about surrounding ourselves with a community of believers.

If you are not currently connected into a community of believers, what is holding you back? Take these concerns to God in prayer, asking Him to guide you towards a community where you can both give and receive His love. If you are already part of a community, reflect on how you can be more intentional in bringing a little bit of heaven into your interactions.

Remember, community is not just a place to be, but a place to become. As we engage with others, we not only prepare ourselves for eternity but also bring a glimpse of heaven to earth.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Take a moment and envision what community in Heaven will be like. Write down your thoughts. How does the biblical vision of Heaven as a place of “no mores” shape your understanding of the importance of community here on earth?

In what ways have you experienced a “taste of heaven” through your interactions with a community of believers?

DAY 4 | COMMUNITY MAKES JESUS KNOWN

by Taylor Harrison

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:35

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

John 17:20-23

Jesus knew the power of community. The community we have can change lives; **it's supposed to change lives.** God chose His followers (us) to make himself known in the world. It starts with our personal relationship with God because that's the only way we can fill our cups to pour out in the lives of others. The love that has been lavished on us should naturally be experienced by those we are in community with. God wants to use love to draw others to Him. Jesus himself sums up the whole of what it means to be a disciple with two phrases: love God and love others (Mark 12:29-31).

THEY WILL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS BY OUR LOVE!

(Feel free to sing along if you know the song)

In John 13:35, Jesus says that the defining characteristic of His followers is love. You cannot express love without someone else. We need community with others because it creates space for us to live out love. Love is how we create a life changing community. The good news, this does not come through our own strength, **but by the power of the Holy Spirit in us.**

How do we make Jesus known? In John 17, Jesus prays that His followers would have unity. Jesus goes further and asks for this unity to mimic the oneness of His relationship with God. The Church is made up of all kinds of people from all different walks of life, yet we are united under the love of Christ. It's a powerful testament to His love when those who normally wouldn't get along set aside their differences to give glory to the Lord. Unity comes through love, and this makes Jesus known.

Are you promoting unity? In the communities you are in, how are you loving others in spite of your differences? We cannot love others well without regularly spending time with God and letting Him love us. What is holding you back from loving others as God does? Is there a difficult person God is calling you to love? Is there someone God is calling you to love through a group or community you are connected in? Right now, take a moment to reflect on the ways God has loved and continues to love you. You have the ability to show others the love of God that has been unconditionally poured out on you. Today, make Jesus known by how you love others.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

What is one tangible way you can make Jesus known in the communities you are a part of through love this week? Be specific.

In what ways are you currently pouring into your relationship with God? Are you allowing Him to fill your cup so you can pour into others?

DAY 5 | COMMUNITY REVEALS SIN & OFFERS GRACE

by Andy Wing

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”

James 5:16 (NLT)

“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.”

Galatians 6:1

“My grace is all you need, for my power works best in your weakness.”

2 Corinthians 12:9a (NLT)

These verses each focus on grace-filled action in community: confess, pray, and restore. **We cannot do life alone**, it is not how God designed it for us. There are several Life Group sayings that I have heard over the years that remind me of this, “it is dangerous to do life alone” and “we are better together.” The truth behind these statements is that healing and growth are at the heart of community.

When we live in community with other believers, we are known. When we are known, both our strengths and weaknesses are revealed. While this can be nerve-racking, it creates the space to grow. The end of James 5:16 says, *“the earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”* Just one of those wonderful results is grace.

If community reveals our weakness, it also provides us the opportunity to offer grace.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, God is telling us that grace is a powerful gift. It is something we cannot earn, but it is a gift that we can receive. **Grace is also a gift that we can offer others.** When we practice grace in community, we experience the powerful work of God. We are not just known by others, but God is made known through us.

We have a natural tendency to run from community because of its ability to reveal our weakness. At the root of this fear is shame. Shame leads us to very lonely places...⁹

- We begin concentrating only on our sin instead of concentrating on our Savior
- We begin covering up with religion by becoming focused on good works
- We may lie, deceive, or have a false pride in order to hide
- We develop an inability to be honest with God because we believe we have no true value.

When we find grace in community, it leads us out of our darkness. It breaks us out of shame so that we can be healed and restored. We are not left there because the grace of community spurs us on to encourage others. Remember we don’t just receive grace, we get to offer it to others.

Today, do you need a community to receive or offer grace? Prayerfully seek out a community of believers where you can confess, pray, and restore.

⁹ Church of the Highlands, *Freedom: Small Group Curriculum* (2023), 18-19.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

In your faith journey, how have the relationships in your life revealed opportunities to both offer and receive grace? How have you grown in these instances?

Look back over the ways shame leads us to lonely places. How has shame hindered your ability to reveal your weaknesses or confess your sin to others? How do you need to seek out or engage in community so that you can experience the powerful work of God through the actions of confession, prayer, and restoration?

SESSION 4 | GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GET STARTED

What are some things you like to do on your own? What are some things you like to do with others?

Who was your best friend growing up? What made that person such a good friend?

New Groups: *Getting To Know You* activity (pg. 130)

TAKE IT IN

Watch Session 4: Connecting To Community at mynorthside.com/ctu.

What encouraged or challenged you from the video and daily study guide this week?

Communion Experience: Complete before or after your group discussion (pg. 131)

TALK IT OVER

Read Genesis 1:26-27

God does not and cannot exist outside of community. Since we are created in His image, we are designed for community. We can do many things on our own, but following Jesus isn't one of them. **What's your primary feeling around living more deeply in community with other believers (excitement, hesitation, fear, some other feeling)? If you have spent time in community with other believers before, what is ONE benefit you have experienced?**

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

An 80+ year Harvard study came to the conclusion that strong relationships make us happier and healthier. It's not about how many relationships we have, but how good they are. The study also showed that people who are isolated tend to be less happy, get sick easier, experience faster mental decline, and live shorter lives than those who are more connected.¹⁰ **Do the results of the Harvard study surprise you? How have you experienced the effects of isolation on your health (mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, etc...)?**

Verse 9 reveals that in community we are more productive. **In what ways have you experienced the benefits of productivity in your relationships? As a group, how can we help each other be more productive?**

Verse 10 reveals that in community we can care for one another. **When have you received care from the relationships in your life? As a group, how can we intentionally care for one another?**

¹⁰ Robert Waldinger, *What Makes a Good Life? Lessons from the Longest Study on Happiness*. TED, Dec. 2015, www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness.

Verse 11 reveals that in community we celebrate one another. **Who do you turn to when you need encouragement? As a group, how can we intentionally celebrate one another?**

Verse 12 reveals that in community we strengthen one another. **How have the relationships in your life strengthened your faith? As a group, how can we help strengthen our faith?**

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

Community is pivotal to developing ownership in our faith. This shifts us from being just a consumer to a contributor. **Think about the larger community of your church, how would you rate yourself using the scale below? How can you make a shift towards a contributor?**

Passive Consumer | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | Engaged Contributor

Think about the smaller community of your group. **What difference does it make when we have ownership in our group? Using the examples below, how would you like to better own our group experience?**

Get to know everyone better	Come prepared (i.e. daily devotions)	Speak up during the discussion	Be consistent in attendance
Offer encouragement/support in difficult times (text, card, meal, etc...)	Celebrate wins together	Bring snacks or make a meal	Host the group in your home
Pray at a group session		Lead a group session	Plan a social or serve project

LIVE IT OUT

Both the Bible and secular study agree that community is vital for our well-being. God designed us to live in relationship with others. When we invest in real friendships, we align with how God made us and we experience the blessings that come with it. But community and relationships are not easy. There are a million reasons not to take the risk of growing in community, but there is one great reason to choose it, God made us for it. Think about the relationships you have in and outside of your group. Whom might God be calling you to deepen your friendship(s) with this season? Pursue the answer and continue building community.

Daily Devotions: Take 15-30 minutes each day to dive into the *Connecting The Unconnected* daily devotions. Don't think of it as homework, but time growing alongside your Heavenly Father. Come ready to discuss what you are learning at the next group session.

Memorize: "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." **Ecclesiastes 4:12**

SESSION 4 | FAMILY CONVERSATIONS

These family conversations are designed to help you create moments to talk about God and faith in your family. We want to encourage you to carve out a moment each week to read and discuss each family conversation. This could be over the dinner table, before bedtime, or whenever works best for your family. In each family conversation, you will find four parts.

Scripture: Read the passage out loud, or encourage a family member to read.	Devotion: Read this to your family.	Conversation: Pick and choose what questions are best for your family to discuss.	Prayer: Pray for your family or encourage a family member to pray.
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Just as a heads-up things, probably won't go as planned with your family conversations. Your family may interrupt, someone probably won't pay attention, and there may not be any grand spiritual moments. What matters most is that you are seeking God as a family. Faith in your family is more often caught than taught. Your family will most likely forget these devotions, but they will remember the intentionality and time together. That will set the stage for you to model faith and continue building a spiritual legacy in your family.

SCRIPTURE:

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor.¹⁰ If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?¹² Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

DEVOTION:

Have you ever tried to do something challenging all by yourself, like carrying a heavy load, completing a project, or solving a tough problem? Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 reminds us that life is better when we have good friends by our side. Friends can help us when we're down, support us when we're struggling, and celebrate with us when things go well. Just like a rope made of three strands is stronger, having good friends makes us stronger too.

Friendship is a gift from God. A recent study from Harvard University concluded that close friendships, more than money or fame, are what keep people happy throughout their lives. This is one of the many reasons why we need to choose our

friends wisely. The people you surround yourself with can greatly influence your thoughts and actions. Good friends encourage you to be your best self, help you make wise choices, and stand by you no matter what.

Think about the friends you have right now. Are they helping you grow closer to God and become the person He wants you to be? Are you taking the time to invest in your friendships?

It's not just about finding good friends, it's also about being a good friend. Here are some ways you can be a good friend to others:

Listen: Listen to your friends. Show interest in what they have to say, because this shows that you value and care about them.

Encourage: Offer help when they need it and celebrate their successes. Build them up!

Forgive: No one is perfect. You will have conflicts with your friends. Be quick to offer and receive forgiveness.

Pray: Lift your friends up in prayer, asking God to guide and bless them. You may be the only one praying for your friends.

Be Honest and Trustworthy: Keep your promises. Be someone your friends can rely on and confide in.

You need good friends. Our family needs good friends. Take time to invest into your friendships. Be there for them, and let them be there for you. Remember, two are better than one, and with God at the center, your friendships can have a big impact in your life and the lives of others.

CONVERSATION:

What are some things that would be hard to accomplish on your own?

Who are some of your best friends? Why do we need good friends in our lives?

Use the list of ways to be a good friend as a reference. What are some qualities you look for in a good friend, and how can you develop those qualities in yourself?

Can you share a time when a friend helped you through a difficult situation? How did their friendship make a difference?

How can our family be more intentional about building friendships with other families?

PRAYER:

As a family, give thanks to God for the gift of friendship and all the friends you have in your lives. Ask God to guide you to choose your friends wisely. Finally, ask him to help you be a good friend to others.

SESSION 5

CONNECTING OTHERS
TO COMMUNITY





There are only a few things in life that compare to the frustration of spending hours on a jigsaw puzzle, only to realize one piece is missing! If you can't find it, it doesn't matter how good the puzzle looks, it will always have a glaring hole from the missing piece. Only when you have all the pieces can you complete the picture.

We are like puzzle pieces made to connect together. We are designed for a purpose and we are wired for community. Both of these things come into clearer focus in relationships with others. This is why it matters that we don't just connect into community, we also invite others into it. This invitation could be to the community of a church service, event, or group. Or, it could be an invitation for people to join our lives, kitchens, backyards, group texts, and daily rhythms. Real relationships are one of the most powerful ways we can reflect the heart of God to others. In other words, community helps us and others see the bigger picture.

Most people are not drawn to God because of a perfect argument with the right words. They get curious when they encounter real faith lived out with humility, love, and consistency. When they see believers carrying one another, showing up for each other, and walking through life, that's often what opens the door to questions about God. Community isn't just for us, it's an invitation for people to experience God through us.

Don't underestimate the power of your presence in someone else's story. Since you are filled with the Holy Spirit, your presence is also His presence. There are people all around us who feel like a puzzle piece unsure of where they belong. What if the invitation to church, your group, and/or your life is what helps someone finally see where they fit? What if your invitation is what helps people connect deeper or for the very first time?

When we connect into community, we are known and loved. This is extended to anyone else we invite to join us. So, scoot over, make room at the table, and help people see God's bigger picture by inviting them to be a part of it with you.

“Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

Luke 5:18-20

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;”

Romans 12:6

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Colossians 3:17

“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Acts 20:35

“Be friendly with everyone. Don’t be proud and feel that you know more than others. Make friends with ordinary people.”

Romans 12:16 (CEV)



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

DAY 1 | BRING THEM TO JESUS

by Rick Vieira

“Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

Luke 5:18-20

In Luke 5:18-20, we witness a powerful moment, a group of friends going to extraordinary lengths to bring a paralyzed man to Jesus. When they can't reach Him because of the crowd, they climb onto the roof, tear it open, and lower their friend down on a mat right in front of Jesus. Jesus doesn't just see the paralyzed man; **He sees their faith**, the collective belief and effort of the friends. In response, He heals not only the man's body but addresses the deeper need, forgiveness and restoration.

This passage reveals something vital about biblical community. **It's not just about being together; it's about bringing each other closer to Jesus.**

Faith is strengthened in community. These friends believed that Jesus could heal and their actions proved it. They didn't let obstacles stop them. In community, our faith is encouraged and multiplied when others stand with us and for us.

Community carries each other's burdens. The paralyzed man couldn't reach Jesus on his own, but his community literally carried him. In the same way, biblical community means stepping into one another's struggles, praying, supporting, and sometimes doing the heavy lifting to bring someone to hope and healing. Galatians 6:2 says, *“Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Jesus responds to collective faith. Notice that Jesus saw their faith, not just the faith of the man on the mat. Our combined faith as a community can have a powerful impact. When we intercede for one another and act with compassion, God moves in ways that go beyond what we can do alone.

Healing and forgiveness foster true community. When we bring people to Jesus, we aren't just fixing life's surface issues, we're inviting them into wholeness in Christ. As people experience Christ's grace, reconciliation with God and others becomes possible. That's the foundation of real community.

It is true in a marriage, but it is true in other relationships as well. **As people grow closer to Christ, they also grow closer to each other.** Being part of a biblical community helps strengthen both faith and relationships. It is a vital aspect to our faith that is often, but should never be, overlooked.

Pray this simple prayer: *Lord Jesus, thank You for the example of these faithful friends. Help me to be someone who carries others to You through prayer, encouragement, and bold action. Teach me to build and keep this type of community in my life. Amen!*

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

As you read the devotion, did someone come to mind that you should be leading towards a closer relationship with Christ? Take a moment and jot down the names of those in your life who need to be carried to Jesus right now? Once you do that, pray that God will give you the opportunity and the words towards making that happen.

Are you part of a community that strengthens your faith and helps you grow spiritually? If so, take some time to reflect on how the people in that community have helped you and give thanks for them. If not, ask God to help you find this type of community and to break down any barriers that might be stopping you from obtaining it.

DAY 2 | BUILD FRIENDSHIPS

by Rick Vieira

"Be friendly with everyone. Don't be proud and feel that you know more than others. Make friends with ordinary people."

Romans 12:6 (CEV)

In a world that often values status, appearance, and personal achievement, Romans 12:16 offers a countercultural call to humility, unity, and genuine community. Paul's words remind us that living as followers of Christ means resisting the temptation to elevate ourselves above others.

Let's take a closer look at what is being taught in this short, but very powerful and practical portion of scripture.

Be friendly with everyone. While we are not encouraged to be "friends" with everyone, we can be "friendly" with everyone. In the body of Christ, we are diverse in background, gifting, and personality, yet we are called to be one. This unity isn't forged through similarity, but through a love that mirrors Christ's humility and grace.

Don't be proud. Pride is often subtle. It shows up when we think our time is more valuable than someone else's, when we gravitate toward those who can benefit us, or when we dismiss people who seem beneath us. However, Christ, who had every right to claim glory, humbled Himself to serve everyone no matter their station. To follow Him is to do the same. It means choosing peace over pride, empathy over ego, and connection over competition.

Don't feel you know more than others. This is a great reminder to us that, as we grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Peter 3:18), we should not lord this knowledge over others who have yet to come to the same understanding. This is what the Pharisees of old did and being "pharisaical" is not a way to bring others into biblical community.

Make friends with ordinary people. This phrase challenges our comfort zones. It beckons us to cross social, economic, and cultural lines to see and serve those who are often overlooked or marginalized. Jesus didn't shy away from lepers, tax collectors, or sinners. Our call is to reflect that same nearness and compassion.

Today, ask God to search your heart. Are there hidden areas of pride? Are there people you've ignored or avoided because they didn't "fit"? Let the Holy Spirit soften those places and give you Christ-like eyes to see others, not as the world does, but as God does. These reminders will go a long way towards helping us connect others to community.

Pray this prayer today: Lord, teach me to walk in humility and live in harmony with those around me. Remove pride from my heart and help me love all people as You do. Make me more like Jesus. Amen!

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Have you ever found yourself being closed off to others? Have there been times when you are just unwilling to have a friendly conversation with someone you don't know well? These are all signs that we may not be exhibiting the Christ-like attitude God wants from us. What are some things you are willing to change in order to build some new friendships to point others toward Jesus?

What would you say is the difference between sharing the knowledge of Christ versus sharing the love of Christ? As we look to connect people into community, is one more important than the other?

DAY 3 | REPRESENT JESUS

by Rick Vieira

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Colossians 3:17

This verse is a powerful reminder that the Christian life is not just about what we do in church or during our devotional time, but about **how we live in every moment**. Paul urges us to see all of life, our words and our actions, as opportunities to represent Jesus.

“Whatever you do” is all-encompassing. It includes the big decisions and the small routines: how we speak to our families, how we work, how we respond to stress, and how we treat others. When done in Jesus’ name, these ordinary actions become an important part of building community. We are ambassadors of Christ not just in our theology, but in how we speak kindly, forgive freely, and serve selflessly.

To do something “in the name of the Lord Jesus” means to act in a way that reflects His character—loving in truth, humility, and grace. It means asking, **“Would Jesus be honored by this?”** before we speak or act. This perspective shifts our motivation from seeking personal gain or approval to glorifying God.

Don’t miss the last part of the verse, *“giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*

GRATITUDE KEEPS OUR HEARTS ALIGNED WITH GOD’S WILL.

When we live thankfully, we remember that all we have and all we do are because of His grace.

Let this be a reminder that people who know we are followers of Christ are observing how we respond to them and to others. Both our words and our actions are testimonies. As we look to connect others into the community life of the church, our response to the world around us will go a long way towards accomplishing this goal.

Today, whatever you’re doing, whether washing dishes, answering emails, helping a friend, or making tough decisions, do it in Jesus’ name. **Let your life be a reflection of Him**, and give thanks as you go. Then, as we invite others to church or into any form of community, you will give yourself the best chance for favorable outcomes. God will reward your efforts to reach others for Him!

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Has there been a time recently at home, work, or in community where you didn't react to a situation as well as you would like? In what ways did your words or actions not represent Christ well? How can you guard against these types of reactions in the future?

In most lists of what people don't like about Christians is the word "hypocrisy!" Few things turn off a non-believer quicker than when a follower of Christ exhibits un-Christlike behavior. Why do you think this is so damaging as we look to win people for Christ and connect them into community? Spend some time writing down a few ways you've seen Christians behave hypocritically and then make this list a prayer asking God to protect you from these attitudes.

DAY 4 | PRACTICALLY SERVE

by Dr. Jamie Shockley-Owens

"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Acts 20:35

Paul's farewell words to the Ephesian elders remind us that following Jesus isn't just about personal faith, **it's about connecting others to community through a life of service.** In this verse, Paul reflects on his ministry, not as one who took, but one who gave. His example was a life poured out in love, modeling Christ's own self-giving heart.

To serve others is to live out the Gospel in motion. Every act of service, whether helping a neighbor, encouraging a co-worker, or mentoring a young believer, becomes a bridge that connects people to the heart of God and the warmth of community. True community doesn't form by accident; it grows when people choose to show up for one another, meeting needs with compassion and humility.

Jesus Himself said it is more blessed to give than to receive. This isn't merely a moral statement, it's a revelation of how God designed us. When we serve, something supernatural happens, our hearts expand. **The very act of giving frees us from self-centeredness and fills us with joy, belonging, and purpose.** Service knits us together, not just in shared tasks, but in shared transformation.

In a world that often prizes independence and self-promotion, serving others may seem countercultural. Yet, it is in humility and generosity that we find the deepest connections. When we choose to give our time, our presence, our listening ear, we become conduits of Christ's love. Our hands become His hands extended; our lives become the living evidence of His care.

The early church thrived because believers not only worshiped together but **served together.** They broke bread, shared resources, and cared for one another's needs (Acts 2:44–47). In doing so, their communities became radiant with the presence of Christ, drawing others to the faith.

To connect others to community means we do more than speak about love, we live it. **Every act of service invites others into belonging, and every expression of generosity points back to the Giver of all good things.** Pray and ask God to lead you to where He wants you, then step out in faith, practically serving others in and outside of your church.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Who in your life might need to experience Christ's love through your practical acts of service this week?

How can you help create a stronger sense of community through generosity, encouragement, or hospitality?

DAY 5 | DON'T GO ALONE

by Elise Clift

"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel..."

Philippians 1:27

Faith was never meant to be lived alone.

From the very beginning, God created people to live in relationship with Him and with each other. In this verse, Paul reminds the church in Philippi that they are called to stand firm together. **Their faith was not a solo mission but a shared one.**

When we face hard times, it is easy to pull away and try to handle everything on our own.

We may think isolation will protect us, but it often weakens us. Just like a single coal pulled away from a fire cools quickly, our passion for Christ can fade when we disconnect from our community. We need each other to stay encouraged, accountable, and focused on what truly matters.

Paul uses the phrase *"stand firm in one spirit."* This does not mean everyone must think or act the same way. **It means that even with differences, we move in the same direction toward Jesus.** Unity in the body of Christ does not mean uniformity. It means working together with shared purpose and love. When believers walk side by side in faith, the world sees something powerful. Unity shows what the love of Christ looks like in action.

Community gives us a place to celebrate victories and to find strength in struggles. It reminds us that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Through shared prayer, encouragement, and service, our faith grows stronger. We learn that the gospel was never meant to be carried alone but shared together.

Paul's message is simple but powerful.

LIVE IN A WAY THAT HONORS CHRIST AND DO IT TOGETHER.

We represent Jesus best when we walk in unity. God designed us to depend on Him and on each other. When we stay connected to a community of believers, we reflect His love to the world.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Who are the people that help you stay strong in your faith? How can you thank them this week?

[illegible]

Who are the people that you need to help stay strong in their faith? How can you encourage them this week?

[illegible]

SESSION 5 | GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GET STARTED

In Session 2, we learned that the definition of connecting is “joining or linking things together, especially as to provide access and communication.” We are all too familiar with how frustrating a weak communications signal can be! **Have you ever been in a situation where you had no cell phone signal and needed it? Can you draw some parallels to how disappointing it must be for God to have a sporadic connection to us?**

New Groups: *Getting To Know You* activity (pg. 130)

TAKE IT IN

Watch Session 5: Connecting To Christ at mynorthside.com/ctu.

What encouraged or challenged you from the video and daily study guide this week?

TALK IT OVER

Read Matthew 18:20 & Philippians 2:2

These are only two of the many scriptures that address togetherness. They show the joy of the Lord in our unity and His desire to be with us when we gather in His name. Often, in our relationships we can focus on what others can do for us, instead of how God is present in them. **Does this understanding change how you think about your relationships with others? Explain how and why.**

Read Matthew 28:19-20 & Luke 5:18-20

In these verses, we all have some responsibility to go and bring people to Jesus Christ. We often view our relationship with Christ as only a personal one. However, there should be an outward facing aspect of this relationship as well, one that brings others closer to Him. **Have you ever seen your relationship with Christ as only personal and inward, without paying enough attention to how it shows outwardly? Explain. What changes could help this outward aspect of our faith become more prevalent for you?**

While it is one thing to have outward facing “relationships,” it is another to have true “friendships” with others. Friends spend quality time with each other. **Have you developed any new friendships in the past few years, people you’ve invited to your home or chosen to spend time with?** If the answer is no, it may be a sign

that you have relationships with others, but not friendships. **Take some time to talk about this with your group. Who do you need to invite to coffee, lunch, an event, or over for dinner.**

Read 1 Peter 2:12 & Ephesians 4:29

Whether we realize it or not, as believers, it's important to remember that what we say or do reveals our beliefs and character to others. **Do you think you handle your life as a believer with enough awareness of how non-believers might see it? If so, share a story. If not, what changes can you make to better guard your faith story and not become a stumbling block for those who don't believe?**

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Peter 3:8 & John 17:23

There is a clear call from Scripture for unity among believers in order to connect others to Jesus. This is perhaps shown most impactfully in Ephesians 4:1-16. There we are directed to:

- v. 3 *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit..."*
- v. 12 *"equip his people for works of service."*
- v. 13 *"become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."*

With all these scriptures in mind, what resonates with you about your role in unity with others? How can you better lead people to Christ and help others grow in the maturity and fullness of Christ?

LIVE IT OUT

One of the best ways to connect others to Christ is to serve others. When we give and serve sacrificially, it speaks to others in a powerful way. This can open the door to spiritual conversations, and eventually to an invitation to church, your group, and connecting to Jesus. **Discuss with your group practical ways you can serve others to show Christ's love. Where can you get involved that will give you chances to help others connect with Him? As you do, introduce and discuss your plans to complete the Serve Experience (pg. 136).**

Daily Devotions: Take 15-30 minutes each day to dive into the *Connecting The Unconnected* daily devotions. Don't think of it as homework, but time growing alongside your Heavenly Father. Come ready to discuss what you are learning at the next group session.

Memorize: *"Instead, speaking truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."*

Ephesians 4:15

SESSION 5 | FAMILY CONVERSATIONS

These family conversations are designed to help you create moments to talk about God and faith in your family. We want to encourage you to carve out a moment each week to read and discuss each family conversation. This could be over the dinner table, before bedtime, or whenever works best for your family. In each family conversation, you will find four parts.

Scripture: Read the passage out loud, or encourage a family member to read.	Devotion: Read this to your family.	Conversation: Pick and choose what questions are best for your family to discuss.	Prayer: Pray for your family or encourage a family member to pray.
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Just as a heads-up, things probably won't go as planned with your family conversations.

Your family may interrupt, someone probably won't pay attention, and there may not be any grand spiritual moments. What matters most is that you are seeking God as a family. Faith in your family is more often caught than taught. Your family will most likely forget these devotions, but they will remember the intentionality and time together. That will set the stage for you to model faith and continue building a spiritual legacy in your family.

SCRIPTURE:

"One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick.¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven..."²⁴ So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.²⁶ Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Luke 5:17-20; 24-26

DEVOTION:

Have you ever had a friend do something amazing for you? Maybe they stood up for you, gave you a gift, helped you through a tough time, or just made sure you weren't alone. In this story, we read about a group of friends who went above and beyond, and it changed everything.

Their friend couldn't walk. They had heard about the miracles of Jesus and believed He could help. When they got to the house where Jesus was teaching, it was packed with people everywhere. There was no way to get to Jesus. Instead of giving up, they got creative, climbed up on the roof, made a hole in it, and lowered their friend down right in front of Jesus.

Can you imagine that? Dust falling, pieces of debris, people looking up asking what is going on, and suddenly a man is lowered down through the ceiling.

All of this happens right in the middle of Jesus' teaching. It's important to pay attention to what Jesus does next. Jesus doesn't reprimand them or focus only on the paralyzed man. He first notices the faith of the friends. Scripture says, "*When Jesus saw their faith...*" (v. 20). It was their belief that led to their friend's healing, both physically and spiritually.

There is a powerful message of friendship and faith in this story. These men cared so much about their friend that they did whatever it took to bring him to Jesus. This kind of thing still happens today, even if it looks a little different. Sometimes, it's the strong prayers you have for your friends that make a big difference. Other times, people meet Christians, even if they don't fully believe in God yet, and they still want to be around them because something about it feels different. Many times, it is a regular invitation for our friends to join our lives or attend church.

People who don't know God yet need friends who believe because through those friendships they can start to see what real faith looks like. People who do know God need friends who believe because it is through friendships that we find healing and growth. When we invite people into our lives, they encounter God through us. This is the power of connecting others to community. It is in community that we all encounter a real God and experience real faith.

CONVERSATION:

Share a story about a time a friend did something amazing for you?

How does being part of a community, like our family or church, help us experience God and/or grow in our faith?

In the story, why do you think Jesus noticed the friends' faith before anything else? What does that say about how much our faith matters?

Who's someone in your life who might need a little extra love or encouragement right now? What's one fun or kind thing you could do for them this week?

The paralyzed man went home praising God with his friends! What's something God has done for you that makes you want to celebrate?

PRAYER:

As a family, give thanks to God for all the different ways He works in the lives of people. Ask God to help you connect to a community of believers that supports and encourages one another. Pray for opportunities for God to use the faith of your family to make a difference in the lives of those around you.

SESSION 6

CONNECTING
TO CALLING





Have you ever stopped for a moment and thought about your uniqueness? You are the only you there is! Take finger prints for example. Every individual on the planet has a unique set of fingerprints (including identical twins). These fingerprints are classified by the technical terms of loops, whorls, and arches. The actual odds of coming close to matching fingerprints with someone else is 1 in 64 billion.

This small uniqueness of every human being speaks volumes to the creativity of God. But, He didn't stop there when He created you. You have been given a unique personality, gifts, and experiences that make up who you are. As a follower of Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, you have also been given spiritual gifts. In Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) Paul describes this big idea of how we are created, *"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."*

The word "masterpiece" implies intentionality. God uniquely created us with a purpose to serve others. In fact, Christians are regularly referred to as the body of Christ in the Bible (1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Romans 12:3-8, Ephesians 1:15-23; 4:1-16, Colossians 1:15-20). Every body part from the hair on your head to the toenails on your feet has a purpose. Similarly, every person has been created unique with a purpose to glorify God and build up His people.

We have already learned that every believer has the same general calling (connect the unconnected). Every follower of Jesus also has unique calling(s) on how they live out connecting the unconnected. There are specific things God has placed you on this earth to do and has gifted you for. These callings may last for a lifetime or only for a season. Regardless, the questions we all have to wrestle with are, "How has God uniquely created me and how can I use this to serve others?" The answers to these questions help connect us to our calling and guide us to becoming better disciple makers.

“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Matthew 20:28

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

Philippians 2:5-7

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Ephesians 2:10

“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

1 John 3:18

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

Psalms 139:13-14

“Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

Psalms 37:4

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

1 Peter 4:10-11

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”

1 Corinthians 12:4-6



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

DAY 1 | HEART IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SERVICE

by Roy Roberson

“As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.¹³ But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ [a] For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Matthew 9:9-13

Jesus was hardly concerned with what others thought of his actions and choices. He chose to heal people on the Sabbath, which angered the teachers of the law. He also allowed His disciples to pick some heads of grain and eat them on the Sabbath. The Pharisees quickly called Him out for allowing His disciples to do what was **“unlawful”** (Matthew 12:1-2). But what probably upset the Pharisees most of all was that Jesus spent time with, and enjoyed the company of, **“tax collectors and sinners.”** The New Living Translation simply refers to these people as **“scum.”**

“Tax collectors” were so dirty and disgusting to the Pharisees that they were in their own category... but the **“sinners”** were no better.

They were, according to the Pharisees, the dregs of society. Probably the type of people Garth Brooks was referring to when he sang, *“I’ve got friends in low places.”*¹¹ Jesus was often found to be with those people, teaching them about the Kingdom of God and giving them hope for a life lived to the full through a relationship with Him. Jesus knew they needed life-changing teaching that lifted the burdens they were under and pointed them to the right and only true Way.

Since the Pharisees couldn’t ignore Jesus, they watched His every move. When they saw Him eating with people of low moral character, they questioned His motives. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that it’s the sick people who need a doctor. Jesus, of course, is the Great Physician. He came to heal us from the sin-disease we all have and point us to the way of righteousness.

To punctuate His point, Jesus tells the Pharisees to go learn the meaning of **Hosea 6:6a, “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice...”** That seems insulting. Those men were highly educated in the Scriptures. Jesus was just reminding them of what they had forgotten. God wants us to be people of love and have compassion on others. He wants us to live and love people the way He does. That’s more important to God than ritual sacrifices or offerings. Remember, the two greatest commandments are to love God and love people. Loving people means reaching them where they are and loving them as we love ourselves.

This teaching is for all of us as we connect to the great calling Jesus has for our lives.

¹¹ Garth Brooks. *Friends in Low Places*. Written by Dewayne Blackwell and Earl “Bud” Lee. Capitol Nashville, 1990.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

The Pharisees were upset that Jesus enjoyed the company of “the dregs of society.” How do you apply this practice of Jesus to us today? Are you following Jesus’ example in this area? If so, how? If not, how could you change?

Jesus wants us to be people of love and have compassion on others. It’s more important to Him than sacrifices or offerings. What are some practical ways you can show love and compassion to others this week, especially those who may be difficult to love?

DAY 2 | YOU ARE GIFTED

by Roy Roberson

"For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."

Romans 12:4-8

When you think about it, it's kind of incredible that God allows us to serve and be useful in His Church. He wants us to build His Church and invest in the lives of His people. By doing these things, we actually grow and mature our faith.

Sometimes we go to church and hear the ministers ask for volunteers and don't realize they are only inviting us to do what God wants us to do by using our gifts, talents, and abilities to serve others.

Asking to get involved and connect to our calling isn't the church leadership's idea... It's God's idea. **Ephesians 2:10** teaches, ***"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*** Because God uses us in His plan, we can use whatever spiritual gifts we have, combined with our natural talents and abilities, and find a place to serve where we feel useful and enjoy what we do!

Yes...that's true...we can enjoy what we do! God doesn't want you to be miserable in your service, He wants you to be fulfilled. Environments where our passions (interests) and abilities intersect are perfect places to connect and serve.

Each person has natural and learned talents and abilities. Every believer in Jesus also has at least one spiritual gift given by God, through the Holy Spirit, to use in the life of the church.

The Church is the Body of Christ. He is the head and we are the members. Just like your body has many parts with many functions, so it is with His Church. We are all individually connected to Christ and to each other. **No one person can do everything, but every person can do something.** When we all work together, we make our church come to life and work as God intended the church to do. Some teach, some serve those in need, some encourage, some lead, and the list goes on and on. Every person has a place, every person has a function, every person is needed, and no one person is more important than anyone else. We're all called to contribute to God's Kingdom work.

The question that remains, "How will you use the gifts God has given you to serve others?"

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

What are your natural talents and abilities? How might you use them to be part of God's plan at your church? If you are unsure how God wants to use you, begin praying about it.

Sometimes Christians are tempted to think the roles that are most visible, such as preaching or leading worship, are more important than other roles. How does Romans 12:4-8 address this misconception? What are some important service roles at a church that most people never see?

DAY 3 | YOU ARE UNIQUE

by Roy Roberson

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

Psalm 139:13-14

God loves variety. Just think of the many varieties of flowers and plants He created. Or consider the fruits and vegetables and their many sizes, shapes, colors, and flavors. Or look at the animals. Talk about variety! There's so many different types, sizes, colors, and species. Even if you just look at dogs, you can't miss the imagination of God.

A German Shepherd and a Cocker Spaniel look so different, but they're both dogs. Or what about a Dalmatian and a Chihuahua? Nothing alike. **God loves variety.**

God did amazing work in creation and some of His very best work was done when He created humans. Created in His likeness, God made sure to make each one of us individually and uniquely. No carbon copies in humanity. **Every person has a unique look on the outside, but also a unique make up of talents and abilities on the inside.** Even if you meet someone who has the same talents and abilities as you, you have unique life experiences. Those unique experiences make up who you are and who you're becoming.

The beautiful thing about God calling you to work in His service and find your place to connect is that you bring something unique to the team when you sign up.

THE TEAM WOULDN'T BE THE SAME WITHOUT YOU. WHY? BECAUSE THERE'S NO ONE EXACTLY LIKE YOU.

And that is a good thing, but it's also a God-thing.

In Psalm 139, David thanked God for making him unique, knowing that it was God's hand who crafted him together, making him different from every other person who ever existed or will ever exist. There was only one King David, and there is only one YOU! But, God took it one step further. Once you accept Jesus as Savior and Lord and receive the Holy Spirit, God continues to work in and through you with His power. He refines you, supports you, strengthens you, and encourages you as He transforms you to be more and more like Jesus.

God loves you and wants to use you, the unique you, to build His church and help others. He's calling you to connect and be used for His good purposes.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Because you are uniquely made by God, you bring something special to any team you join. What are some of the uniquenesses created in you by God?

How does serving in your church make you more and more like Jesus by refining, strengthening, and encouraging you? What's one step you need to take to serve your church?

DAY 4 | GOD REDEEMS YOUR PAIN

by Rachel Hollensead

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

We all carry pain. Sometimes our pain comes from choices we made and sometimes it blindsides us without warning. In those moments, Paul reminds us that God never wastes our pain. **The very comfort we receive in our suffering becomes the comfort we can give to others.** That is redemption, when God takes what was broken and uses it as a tool to build up someone else.

Think of it like this: a scar tells two truths. A scar not only proves that a wound once existed, it also proves that healing has taken place. **When someone shares their scars, they are not glorifying the wound, they are pointing to the Healer.** That's how God uses our stories. What once brought shame or sorrow can become the very testimony that brings hope to another.

A woman from our church lost her husband unexpectedly. For months, she struggled through her grief, learning how to lean on God's presence and the prayers of her faith community during that time. Through her healing, she discovered that the pain had given her a unique compassion for others in similar situations. **Her deepest hurt became her greatest ministry.** She grew through her pain to lead GriefShare, a Care Group that offers comfort to those who mourn with the same comfort she once received.

Too often, we believe pain disqualifies us from being useful to God. We think, "How can God use someone this broken?" However, Paul flips the script. Our struggles don't disqualify us, they prepare and equip us. Romans 8:28 reminds us that God works all things together for good for those who love Him.

PAIN BECOMES A BRIDGE INTO SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFE.

Let's take a moment to redefine pain in light of calling. Pain is not the end of the story; it's part of the preparation. Redemption means God takes what was meant for harm and turns it for good (Genesis 50:20). Calling means healing becomes a gift for others. And the best part? The same God who met us in our darkest moments goes with us as we walk into the pain of others.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

How has God comforted you in a specific season of pain, and how might He be inviting you to share that comfort with others?

What scars in your life could become bridges to help someone else experience God's healing?

DAY 5 | USE WHAT YOU HAVE TO SERVE OTHERS

by John Konkler

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."

1 Peter 4:10-11

As I sit here meditating on this scripture, the Holy Spirit keeps bringing to my heart and mind a song written from Michael W. Smith, *"Open the Eyes of My Heart."*¹²

The lyrics are simple, yet deeply powerful:

*Open the eyes of my heart, Lord,
Open the eyes of my heart,
I want to see You,
I want to see You...*

*To see You high and lifted up,
Shining in the light of Your glory,
Pour out Your power and love,
As we sing Holy, Holy, Holy...*

Have you ever wondered, **"Why am I here?"** Have you ever prayed and asked God, **"What do You want me to do?"** Perhaps you've even said, **"Here I am, Lord—use me."** But what if part of God's plan is simply to open the eyes of your heart so you can see people and situations the way He sees them? **Are you willing to see... and then act?**

Serving God doesn't always mean doing something grand or public. Sometimes it's as simple as offering a smile, sharing an encouraging word, giving a hug, or sitting quietly with someone who just needs to be heard. It could mean fixing a meal for a family whose loved one just came home from the hospital, visiting someone in a nursing home, or even using extra resources to meet someone's financial need. These are small acts in the eyes of the world, but **when done through the strength and love of God, they are holy acts of service** that bring Him glory.

In the military, there's a term called **"wingman."** A wingman provides mutual support, protection, and assistance—originally used to describe a pilot flying backup to a leader in an Air Force formation. This past week, I was blessed to be a spiritual wingman for someone I deeply respect and love. We had just listened to a powerful message by Max Lucado about the Holy Spirit. As the service ended and people began to file out, I noticed my friend sitting a few rows ahead of me, his face buried in his hands. It was clear that the Holy Spirit was ministering to him. There was no need for me to step forward, hug him, or even ask if he was okay. Instead, I simply sat down in the row behind him and quietly prayed. After a few minutes, we both stood. With tears in his eyes, he turned to me and simply said, *"Thank you."*

He didn't need to explain. I didn't need to ask. At that moment, I knew I had been a **wingman**, covering a friend in prayer.

¹² Michael W. Smith, *Open the Eyes of My Heart*, Worship, Reunion Records, 2001.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Think of a time when God used someone to encourage you (mentally, emotionally, physically, or spiritually)? How did you experience God's love through their act of service?

In what ways do you need to ask God to open the eyes of your heart so you can see Him and/or others clearly? After writing down your answers, spend time in prayer asking God to help you see.

SESSION 6 | GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GET STARTED

What is a hidden talent that you possess? What is a hidden talent you wished you possessed?

It's incredible how God allows us to serve and be useful in His church. **If you are currently serving or have served in the past, what are some ways that investing into the lives of others has brought blessings to you?**

New Groups: *Getting To Know You* activity (pg. 130)

TAKE IT IN

Watch Session 6: Connecting to Your Calling at mynorthside.com/ctu.

What encouraged or challenged you from the video and daily study guide this week?

TALK IT OVER

Read 1 Peter 4:10-11, 1 John 3:18 (NLT) & Psalm 37:4

"If you say you love God, then you must serve others." **Do you agree? Why or why not?**

The most important part of serving isn't what you do, it's having a servant's heart and a humble spirit. **What does this mean to you? Give some practical ways this truth might be applied.**

We often think of serving others in big moments or taking on a volunteer role. These are good things, but many times a heart of service is developed in the small daily moments of loving others in our lives. **What are some small ways you can serve someone in your life this week?**

In the video, believers were compared to babies. New believers often don't make big contributions to the work of the Church, but as they grow and mature, they begin to dive in and help. **How have you experienced this in your own faith journey?**

What are some gifts and abilities God has given to you? How are you using these gifts to serve others?

Reflect on how God has grown your faith or met you in difficult times in your life. **How could you use these moments to help or serve someone else? Discuss some ideas with your group.**

Psalm 37:4 says, “Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” **How does this verse shape your perspective on finding joy through serving others?**

Reflect over these three questions. What would I enjoy doing? Who would I enjoy serving with? Would I enjoy serving behind the scenes? **Do these questions spark any thoughts about an opportunity for you to serve others? If you are currently serving in the church, what is your next step to better love those you are serving? If you are not currently serving in the church, what is your next step to start?**

LIVE IT OUT

God absolutely has a plan for every person. He loves you and made you uniquely so you’re not like anyone else. Like a fingerprint, there is no one else in the world with your exact compliment of personality, abilities/talents, experiences, and gifts. If you’re willing, God will use the uniqueness of who you are to help others know and/or grow in relationship with Him. What are the unique personality, abilities/talents, experiences, and gifts God has given you? To help you answer this question, use the appendix *How Am I Created To Serve Others* (pg. 133). This simple tool will help you reflect on your uniqueness and how you can start serving others. After completing the exercise, begin praying and exploring over opportunities and areas to serve.

Daily Devotions: Take 15-30 minutes each day to dive into the *Connecting The Unconnected* daily devotions. Don’t think of it as homework, but time growing alongside your Heavenly Father. Come ready to discuss what you are learning at the next group session.

Memorize: “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” **Ephesians 2:10**

Serve Experience: Discuss your plans to complete the Serve Experience (pg. 136).

SESSION 6 | FAMILY CONVERSATIONS

These family conversations are designed to help you create moments to talk about God and faith in your family. We want to encourage you to carve out a moment each week to read and discuss each family conversation. This could be over the dinner table, before bedtime, or whenever works best for your family. In each family conversation, you will find four parts.

Scripture: Read the passage out loud, or encourage a family member to read.	Devotion: Read this to your family.	Conversation: Pick and choose what questions are best for your family to discuss.	Prayer: Pray for your family or encourage a family member to pray.
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Just as a heads-up, things probably won't go as planned with your family conversations. Your family may interrupt, someone probably won't pay attention, and there may not be any grand spiritual moments. What matters most is that you are seeking God as a family. Faith in your family is more often caught than taught. Your family will most likely forget these devotions, but they will remember the intentionality and time together. That will set the stage for you to model faith and continue building a spiritual legacy in your family.

SCRIPTURE:

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

DEVOTION:

What’s your favorite animal? You may have never thought about this question. Or maybe you have thought about it so much that your room is decorated with your favorite animal. With a quick internet search you can quickly learn that there are millions of different species of animals, and there are still more undiscovered. How amazing is that!

Take a second and look at your fingers. In particular, your finger prints. Every individual on the planet has a unique set of fingerprints (including identical twins). These fingerprints are classified by the technical terms of loops, whorls, and arches. The actual odds of coming close to matching fingerprints with someone else is 1 in 64 billion. How amazing is that!

The amount of different animals in the world and the uniqueness of fingerprints

reveals how big and creative God is. Did you know that you are just as unique? You are the only you there is! God used His creativity to create you. Along the way, He has given you a unique personality, talents, passions, and experiences that make up who you are right now. All of these things are not to be kept to yourself because you were created with a purpose.

Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10, that we are God's masterpiece. Masterpiece is a word that is often used to describe works of art. Just like an artist plans and creates a beautiful piece of art, God has designed each of us with care and intention. That intention is to do good things!

Sometimes, it might be hard to see ourselves as masterpieces, especially when we feel like we don't measure up to others or when we make mistakes. Remember, a masterpiece isn't about being perfect, it's about being created with love and purpose. God sees the potential in you, even when you don't see it in yourself.

Think about some of the things you enjoy doing or are good at. Maybe you love drawing, playing sports, helping others, or solving puzzles. These are gifts that God has given you, and He wants you to use them to make a difference in the world.

Think about how you can use your unique talents to do good things. Maybe it's helping a friend who's having a tough day, volunteering at your church, or simply being kind to someone who needs it. Every small act of kindness and love is part of the good things God has prepared for you. This week, be the unique person God created you to be and show His love by doing good things.

CONVERSATION:

What's your favorite animal? Why?

What does it mean to you to be called God's "masterpiece?" How does that make you feel about yourself?

Why do you think God created each of us with different abilities and interests? How does this diversity benefit the world?

What are some talents or interests you have that you think God might want you to use for good things?

Have you ever struggled with comparing yourself to others? How can remembering that you are God's unique creation help with that?

PRAYER:

As a family, thank God for making each of you unique! Ask God to help you discover ways to use your talents to help others. Ask Him to help remind you that you are God's masterpieces, and He has amazing plans for you!

SESSION 7

CONNECTING OTHERS
TO CALLING





Whether you are a kid or adult, there is something so simple about the enjoyment of throwing a rock into a lake. It could be the giant splash of a large rock. It could be the multiple sounds of a handful of rocks hitting the water. Or, if you have fine tuned your skills, there is nothing better than skipping a rock across the water. It doesn't matter the size, amount, or finesse that comes with throwing rocks, each makes an impact known as a ripple. The ripples in the water spread out impacting the surface of the lake. When we help people connect to their calling and make disciples, we initiate a spiritual ripple effect. With God's help, it extends beyond us impacting lives in ways we may never fully see.

God has specifically placed people in our lives. Some don't know Him yet and others are already following. In each case, we are called to make an impact. Each conversation, act of kindness, teaching of biblical truths, moment of sharing our faith, or encouragement to live in obedience can set off a spiritual chain reaction spreading the love of Christ further than we could imagine.

As you grow as a follower of Jesus, God equips you with spiritual rocks because He has a purpose for your life. This doesn't end with you; He has a purpose for everyone's life. God is asking us to help others discover His purpose for their lives. He is asking us to help others discover and know Him better. Are we willing to throw our rocks? Are we willing to invest our lives to have a spiritual impact that could lead to ripples upon ripples for generations? If it's fun to throw rocks in a lake, what type of joy will it bring to your life to make a lasting spiritual impact? This is why we need to intentionally pursue connecting others to their calling.

"God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us. Glory to God in the church! Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus! Glory down all the generations! Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!" **Ephesians 3:20-21 (MSG)**

Throw in your rocks and let God begin to make ripples with your life.

“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.¹⁹ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them,²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.”

Matthew 4:18-22

“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.¹¹ I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.¹² While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.¹³ “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”

John 17:6-19

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

Acts 4:13



[illegible]

DAY 1 | MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by Andy Clark

"When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them.¹³ 'You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am.'¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

John 13:12-17

In the first century, the roads were unsurfaced, uncleaned, and used by people and animals. **When they were dry, it was a mixture of dust and dirt. When they were wet, it was liquid mud.** The shoes that ordinary people wore were sandals consisting of soles held together by a few straps. These sandals gave little protection to the dust, dirt, and mud of the roads. For this reason, there were always waterpots at the doors of houses and a servant (if there was one) would wash the feet of the guests as they entered. We know from John 13:2 that Jesus and His disciples were already eating when He began to wash their feet. **This means that there was no servant at the door, and no one present was willing to wash the others feet.**

Do you think Jesus watched each disciple as they entered the home? Maybe He wondered if one of His disciples would pick up the towel and waterpot. Maybe He hoped that at least one would grasp the servant heart of God that He had been revealing to them. **While Jesus might have been thinking these things, an argument broke out amongst the disciples on which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24).** This argument led Jesus to show them what greatness really looked like with an object lesson for the ages. Jesus grabbed the waterpot, a towel, knelt down taking on the role of a servant, and washed their feet.

When it comes to making a difference in someone's life, where is the focus? It's on someone else, and not you. **We cannot truly make a difference when we are focused on ourselves.** This is the evening before the road to the cross and Jesus is thinking about His disciples. In order for you to help someone step into their calling, you have to first be willing to wash their feet. This means you have to know that person well enough to humbly step into their mess and help guide them to someplace new.

Later in his letter, the disciple Peter writes, *"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble'"* (1 Peter 5:5b). Maybe Peter was reflecting on his foot washing when he wrote these words. **What he experienced was the King of Kings humbly serving putting God's agenda at the forefront of His life.** Where are you putting your agenda first over God's agenda for your life? Who in your life do you need to intentionally serve to make a Kingdom difference? Prayerfully ponder these questions today.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Where in your life might you be putting your own plans or comfort above God's purpose for you?

Who in your life needs encouragement, support, or practical help right now? Is there someone God is calling you to mentor, walk with, or simply be present for?

DAY 2 | DO FOR A FEW WHAT YOU WISH YOU COULD DO FOR THE MANY

by Andy Clark

"Just as a nursing mother cares for her children,⁸ so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well..."¹¹ For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children,¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."

1 Thessalonians 2:7b-8; 11-12

DISCIPLE MAKING IS RELATIONAL

1 Thessalonians 2:8 reveals this in a powerful way, *"we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well."* It wasn't just about sharing the right words, it was an invitation to sharing life. Discipleship happens when we share our lives, because that is where people encounter God working in us.

As we process this truth, it can be overwhelming because there are too many people that don't know Jesus. There is too much brokenness, pain, and hurt. There are just too many people to share our lives with. It is tempting to say to ourselves, "how can I make a difference," and become so discouraged that we don't even try. Or if we do try to make a difference, we can become so worn out that we quit in the process. How can we be relational disciple makers and make an impact?

The answer, Jesus did not equally distribute his time. The Gospels record 17 times Jesus was with the crowds and 46 occasions He was with His disciples. Jesus had many followers and he chose 12 disciples to intentionally pour into. Of those 12, He specifically invested further into 3 (Peter, James, & John). While we might think that doesn't seem fair, Jesus was okay with it. He was setting an example for us to learn from and follow.

We are not called to make a difference in every person's life (that's God's job). We are called to make a difference in someone's life. This happens within our sphere of relational influence (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.). When we share our lives, we invite people to follow our example as we follow the example of Christ. But, we cannot share our lives with everyone. This is why the mission to make disciples is for every believer. That is the only way that much life can be shared.

Jesus's example reveals a simple truth, **do for a few what we wish we could do for the many.** What if instead of spending a little time with a lot of people, you spent a lot of time with only a few. With those few, you take time to build relationships that point people to Jesus or better equip people to follow. Prayerfully think about how you spend your time. What needs to change in order for you to share your life and example with others?

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Reflect on a time when someone shared their life with you in a meaningful way. How did that impact your spiritual journey?

1 Corinthians 11:1 says, *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”* Within your sphere of relational influence, how is your example revealing Jesus to others? Don’t be discouraged by this question. There is grace. The Holy Spirit can work in spite of our weakness. If needed, prayerfully repent and ask for forgiveness. Follow this time by writing a prayer asking God for help to reveal Him to others by your example.

DAY 3 | DO NOT GROW WEARY

by Andy Clark

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

Galatians 6:9

DISCIPLESHIP TAKES TIME.

It is the spiritual equivalent of parenthood. If you are a parent reading this, you know the ups, downs, joys, and frustrations of raising

kids. If you are not a parent reading this, know that you were the cause behind the last sentence in the life of your parents.

Here’s the first disciple maker reality for us to sit with today. **We want the benefits of being a disciple maker without the pain of getting there.** At times, we don’t want to put in the hard work, disciplined living, sacrificial giving, concern, or prayer. We would much rather invite someone to church and let the ministers take care of the disciple making part. But, as we have learned over and over, disciple making is the mission of every follower of Jesus.

Discipleship takes time. It’s the spiritual equivalent of planting seeds and harvesting a crop. There is always a delay between sowing and reaping a harvest. If a farmer fails to water and de-weed or only plants part of a field, they may yield only a partial crop. There is a promise in this passage that if we continue to invest into the lives of others in the name of Jesus there will be a harvest.

Here’s the second disciple maker reality for us to sit with today. **Your faith grows strongest when you help someone else grow theirs.** There is nothing like passing what you know about following Jesus that makes you stop and think, “What do I actually know?” There are lessons that God can only teach you when developing in a season of spiritual parenthood or farming.

Galatians 6:9 is not clear on exactly what or when the harvest will be. **It is only clear that there will be a harvest if we do not give up.** Here are some potential spiritual crops from discipling others.

The Lost Are Found	The Found Reach The Lost	Spiritual Endurance In You And Others	Spiritual Maturity In You And Others
Fruit of the Spirit In You And Others	Sin Is Overcome In You And Others	Living By Faith In You And Others	God’s Presence In You And Others
Generation Impact	Unknown Kingdom Impact This Side Of Heaven	God Is Glorified	

What a harvest it will be if we do not give up. You can do this! You can help others step into their calling. You can disciple others. Trust in the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Trust in God’s timing and His process. **Keep doing good** and let your journey be a testament to His work in your life.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

How does viewing discipleship like parenthood or farming change your perspective on it? What holds you back from investing in the spiritual growth of others?

What are some specific “spiritual crops” you hope to see in your life and the lives of those you disciple? How can you actively work towards cultivating these?

DAY 4 | EVERYONE HAS A PURPOSE

by Taylor Harrison

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Ephesians 2:10

When we place our faith in Jesus, we are not just saved from a wrath we rightly deserve, **God also makes something beautiful out of us.** We are His masterpiece. Some translations use the word "workmanship." This is translated from the ancient Greek

word *poiema*. There is deeper meaning in this word because it carries with it this idea that we are His beautiful poem.

God created each of us unique. Through Jesus, we are new creations. Everyone has been given a purpose. **We are not meant to be the same.** All of this uniqueness means that the purpose God has for each of us will be different. And that's okay!

It's easy to struggle with comparing ourselves with others. We see someone on fire for God and want to be just like them. In response, we try to do the same things they are doing, but many times don't experience the same results. The truth is that their accomplishments for the Kingdom are because they are following God's unique calling on their life. They aren't trying to be like somebody else. **God made you with a specific purpose in mind that only you can do.** Your Kingdom impact is meant to be unique!

What calling do you think God is putting on your life? You might be thinking, "I'm too broken to be used for His glory..." The Good News is that God made a way for us to be made new! When we put our faith in Jesus, declaring Him as our Savior and Lord, our sins are forgiven and we have the opportunity to start fresh. This journey has brought us to God and He will use that to help bring others to Him.

Just look at the Apostle Paul, he went from persecuting Christians to preaching the Good News of Jesus. He knew all about being made new in Christ, which is probably why he wrote today's verse to the Ephesians. He was pointing out the truth that it is God's hand working throughout our mess to turn us into a masterpiece.

The Bible is nothing but testimonies of broken people using that brokenness to point others to Jesus. That is the beauty of the poem God is writing us into. He is moving us towards good things. He has purposeful and unique good works for us to do. When we pursue them, people get to see the work of God written on our lives.

What is the Lord preparing you for? Take a step back and watch all the little things come together in a beautiful masterpiece that could only come through the work of His hand.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Have you thought of yourself being made on purpose for a purpose? How does God making you a work of art make you feel? What things about yourself can you thank God for?

What do you think God is preparing you for? How can you intentionally pursue that purpose?

DAY 5 | EQUIP THE 99

by Andy Wing

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Ephesians 4:11-16

God has given the church some amazing gifts! What these first few verses are saying is that the responsibility of the ministry does not fall solely on the shoulders of the church leadership team, rather it belongs to the entire body of Christ. Many people don't realize it, but they often approach faith with a consumer mindset. They come to church, enjoy the music, listen to inspiring messages, and then go back home to only repeat the same cycle week after week. It's as if they want to be fans of Jesus, enjoying the experience from a distance, rather than followers. In other words, Jesus is important, but not really the top priority.

We are called to be equippers!

First, this means being equipped, trained, and prepared to do the work God has called us to. **We do this together, I need you and you need me.** We need everyone in the Church to do their part. All followers of Christ are meant to play an active role in the building up of the Church. When this begins to happen, unity is established and The Church operates as one body, *“joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work”* (v. 16). **What do you need to pursue in order to be better equipped?**

Second, we are called to equip the 99 and pass on to others what it means to follow Jesus. Many of us can point to the equippers in our faith stories. There are people that journeyed alongside us for long and short periods of time, leaving a lasting Kingdom impact. You are called to do the same in the lives of others. Who are the 99 surrounding you? Is it your spouse? Is it your kids or grandkids? Is it a family member or close friend? Is it a group of some kind? **How is God calling you to invest into their lives and equip them to run after Jesus?**

Third, we equip the 99 to reach the 1. There are people God wants to reach. You might not be able to reach them, but you can equip someone who can. This is the beauty of discipleship and the Kingdom of God. **The greatest thing you do for the Kingdom of God might just be faithfully discipling and equipping someone to reach their 1.** Ask God today to help and guide you to become a better equipper.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS:

Who in your life has equipped you in your walk with Christ? How did they equip you and what impact did they have?

Are there people in your life right now whom God may be calling you to equip or invest in spiritually? Who are your 99's? What is your next step to start equipping others?

SESSION 7 | GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GET STARTED

What's something fun or meaningful that someone has taught you (i.e. drive, skill, game, cook, dance, song, etc...)? Share a story.

Have you ever taught someone how to do something fun or meaningful ? If so, share a story.

New Groups: *Getting To Know You* activity (pg. 130).

TAKE IT IN

Watch Session 7: Connecting To Community at mynorthside.com/ctu..

What encouraged or challenged you from the video and daily study guide this week?

TALK IT OVER

Read Matthew 4:18-22

This whole study has been about connecting the unconnected to Christ, Community, and Calling. In other words, making disciples. **What do you find most intimidating about being a disciple maker and growing in this area? Why?**

The disciples initially responded to Jesus by simply following Him (John 1:35-50). Most scholars believe that it was 18 months later that Jesus began leading them to a deeper calling of fishing for people. **When it comes to helping people connect to their calling or disciple making, why are relationships important?**

Read John 17:6-19

Below are six intentional ways that Jesus equipped His disciples and the connecting questions.

- ***"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world..."*** John 17:6a
How am I revealing God's character and priorities to those around me?
- ***"For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them..."*** John 17:8a
What is God teaching me through the Bible, and how am I sharing it?
- ***"I pray for them..."*** John 17:9a
Who am I praying for to know Jesus or grow closer to Him?
- ***"While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe..."*** John 17:12a
How am I caring for others and guiding them with love?
- ***"...I have sent them into the world..."*** John 17:18b
How am I getting out of my comfort zone to grow in faith and encouraging others to do the same?
- ***"For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."*** John 17:19
How am I intentionally growing in God's character and priorities?

Which intentional way and connecting question resonates or challenges you the most? Why?

In verse 15, Jesus prays for the protection of His friends. Rather than asking for their removal from the world, He sends them into it, fully aware of their need for spiritual safeguarding.

What kind of opposition have you encountered for being a Christian? What kind of opposition do you think you will face connecting people to their calling and making disciples?

We reproduce who we are. **How have you seen this payout in your own life? What is one next step you need to take to continue developing the character and priorities of Jesus in your life?**

A beginning step to disciple making (connecting others to Christ, Community, and Calling) is making a commitment to prayer. In Session 1, you were asked to identify your 1's (unconnected). **Who are the 99's in your life that need equipping? Between your 1's & 99's, how can you be praying for them?** Make a list of names, add in specific requests, and begin regularly praying.

Read Acts 4:13

A disciple is someone who connects to Jesus, lives connected to Jesus, and connects others to Jesus. The common denominator in all disciples is Jesus. **What have been your biggest takeaways from *Connecting The Unconnected* study? Moving forward, what is your next step to connect the unconnected to Christ, Community, and Calling.**

LIVE IT OUT

We all know more about discipleship than we realize. If a disciple is a follower, then we have made many disciples. It happens when we pass on a recipe or teach someone how to play fantasy football. It could be teaching your kids to share or showing them how to mow the lawn. Disciple making is showing others how to follow Jesus, which comes from our own journey of faith. Prayerfully reflect over the people in your life. Who is God calling you to help better connect to Christ, community, and calling? What next step do you need to take?

Daily Devotions: Take 15-30 minutes each day to dive into the *Connecting The Unconnected* daily devotions. Don't think of it as homework, but time growing alongside your Heavenly Father. Come ready to discuss what you are learning at the next group session.

Memorize: "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him." **Matthew 4:19-20**

Serve Experience: Discuss your plans to complete the Serve Experience (pg. 136).

SESSION 7 | FAMILY CONVERSATIONS

These family conversations are designed to help you create moments to talk about God and faith in your family. We want to encourage you to carve out a moment each week to read and discuss each family conversation. This could be over the dinner table, before bedtime, or whenever works best for your family. In each family conversation, you will find four parts.

Scripture: Read the passage out loud, or encourage a family member to read.	Devotion: Read this to your family.	Conversation: Pick and choose what questions are best for your family to discuss.	Prayer: Pray for your family, or encourage a family member to pray.
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Just as a heads-up, things probably won’t go as planned with your family conversations. Your family may interrupt, someone probably won’t pay attention, and there may not be any grand spiritual moments. What matters most is that you are seeking God as a family. Faith in your family is more often caught than taught. Your family will most likely forget these devotions, but they will remember the intentionality and time together. That will set the stage for you to model faith and continue building a spiritual legacy in your family.

SCRIPTURE:

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

Acts 4:13

DEVOTION:

Have you ever felt like you’re just an ordinary kid or adult, wondering how you could possibly make a difference in the world? Maybe you think you need to be older, smarter, more experienced, or more educated to point people to Jesus and make disciples. But Acts 4:13 shows us something amazing, **God can use anyone to do incredible things, no matter their age or background.**

Peter and John were ordinary guys. In fact, most scholars believe the disciples were teenagers to young adults. They didn’t have a fancy education or special training. What they did have was a relationship with Jesus, and that made all the difference. People noticed their courage and realized it was because they had been with Jesus. This means that spending time with Jesus can transform you into someone who can make a big impact, even if you feel ordinary.

How can you and your family make disciples right where you are? Here are a few ideas:

Be Courageous: Just like Peter and John, you can be bold in sharing your faith. Talk to your friends about Jesus and what He means to you. You don't need all the answers, just share your story.

Lead By Example: Live in a way that shows others what it means to follow Jesus. Be kind, honest, and loving. When people see the difference in your life, they'll want to know more about Jesus.

Pray For People: Pray for the people in your life that do and don't know Jesus. Ask God to be present in their lives.

Pray For Opportunities: Ask God to show you ways you can help others and make a difference. He might surprise you with opportunities to encourage a friend or help someone in need.

Encourage Your Friends: Whether your friends know Jesus or not, help them discover their gifts and talents. Invite them to serve somewhere with you. Share your life with them.

Remember, you don't have to wait until you're older, more experienced, or for the perfect time to make a difference. God can use you right now, just as you are. Spend time with Jesus and let His love and boldness shine through you. You and your family can make disciples. Be encouraged and know that God is with you every step of the way!

CONVERSATION:

Have you ever felt like you're too young, too ordinary, or not ready to be used by God? What makes you feel that way?

Share one extraordinary thing about each of your family members that makes them unique.

What are some simple things we can start doing as a family to grow closer to Jesus?

How can you show others what it looks like to follow Jesus through your actions at school, home, or work?

Who is one person you can pray for or encourage this week?

PRAYER:

As a family, thank God that He can use anyone, no matter how ordinary, to do extraordinary things. Ask God to help your family to grow in faith, use your unique gifts, and encourage others. Finally, pray for God to be present in the lives of your friends/family that don't know Jesus.

APPENDIX | GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Our stories are an essential way to build community. There's a deep link between authenticity and care. When we take a genuine interest in others, they're more likely to open up and be real with us. That kind of mutual care and honesty is the foundation of true community. And it's not something the church can manufacture because it starts with you. Community is a WE, and as a group, WE build it together.

This activity will help you communicate a 5 minute snapshot of your life to your group. Each week, 1-2 group members will share a bit of their story using the below, guided activity. Before your turn, take a moment to write down your answers. Remember, 5 minutes will pass more quickly than you think. Your goal isn't to share your entire life story, but to give your group a foundational understanding of who you are. Feel free to share a photo or two to go along with the story. To make it fun (and a little more exciting), we recommend using a timer. Finally, remember to be real if you're sharing and to take a genuine interest if you're listening.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

WHAT IS SOMETHING FEW PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT YOU?

DESCRIBE YOUR FAMILY.

DESCRIBE YOUR FAITH BACKGROUND.

DESCRIBE A PERSON OR EVENT THAT INFLUENCED WHO YOU ARE TODAY.

APPENDIX | COMMUNION EXPERIENCE

In Acts 2:42, it says that the followers of Jesus devoted themselves to the breaking of bread. This phrase “breaking of bread” is another name used for communion. Taking communion is an important part of being a disciple because it reminds us of what Jesus did for us and why He’s worth following. Jesus told the disciples at the Last Supper to keep gathering together and taking communion (Luke 22:19). That’s why the early Church in Acts 2 continued gathering and taking communion. Disciples live connected to Jesus, and communion reminds us of the grace and mercy found in His death and resurrection.. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we receive His grace and mercy. This allows us to connect in relationship with God and invite others to do the same.

This week, your group will intentionally take a moment to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus by taking communion together.

PREPARE

Where To Get Communion?: Before Session 4, purchase some bread, grape juice, and cups. Any brand of bread or juice will work. It may help to portion out the bread onto a plate and the juice into cups before the group meeting. Also, you could collect prepackaged communion cups for your group at a weekend service.

Who Can Take Communion?: Any person who believes in and trusts Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. It is possible that some members of your group have not taken this step of faith yet and may not want to participate. If you don’t feel comfortable taking communion, participate by listening and reflecting on God’s presence in your life during the moments of prayer.

Who Can Serve Communion?: Any person who believes in and trusts Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. The group leader is the natural choice to lead this communion experience. However, this is a community, we want to invite group members to share in the experience (reading Scripture, passing out communion, praying, etc...).

When To Serve Communion?: You can complete the communion exercise before or after your group study/discussion. The important thing to remember is that this is a time of remembrance, reflection, and celebration. Regardless of when, enjoy the moment of your group growing in your relationships with Jesus Christ together.

TAKING COMMUNION AS GROUP

1. Read the following Scriptures aloud: Ephesians 2:1-10 and Philippians 2:1-11
2. Pass out a piece of bread and a cup of juice to each group member.
3. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 aloud.
4. Read Aloud: The bread represents the body of Christ that was broken for us on the cross. Before taking the bread, spend a moment in the quietness of your own heart and mind to confess any sin.

Wait a minute or until everyone is finished before moving on to the next step.

5. Read Aloud: The juice represents the blood of Jesus that was shed for us on the cross. Through His death and resurrection, all who believe receive the gift of grace and forgiveness. Before drinking the cup, spend a moment reflecting on all the things you are thankful to God for.

Wait a minute or until everyone is finished before moving on to the next step.

6. Read Aloud: 1 Corinthians 11:26 says, “*For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.*” This passage reminds us that in response to the saving grace of Jesus Christ we are called to proclaim His death and resurrection until He returns. The hope is that our group continues to be a place where we live in the grace of Jesus, proclaim His name, and encourage one another to take steps of faith to be more like Him.

7. Pray Together

APPENDIX | HOW AM I CREATED TO SERVE OTHERS?

God has a purpose for every person, including you. He created you with intentionality and love, shaping you uniquely so that no one else in the world is exactly like you. Just like your fingerprint, your combination of personality, abilities/talents, experiences, passions, and spiritual gifts is one of a kind. That's not by accident, it's by design.

Your uniqueness isn't just something to be celebrated, it's something God wants to use. When you're willing to step into God's purpose, He can work through you to help others know Him, experience His love, and grow in their relationship with Him. Whether you feel fully ready or not, your story, your skills, and even your struggles can be used by God to make a difference in someone else's life.

Below is a simple tool to help you think through your uniqueness and how you can use it to serve others. Take a moment to prayerfully read through and write your answers to the questions below. Afterwards, take a step towards your calling to serve others.

HOW HAS GOD WIRED MY PERSONALITY?

Place a mark on the line that would best describe you:

Extrovert	_____	Introvert
Thinker	_____	Feeler
Routine	_____	Variety
Team	_____	Solo
Follow	_____	Lead
Task Driven	_____	Relationship Driven

WHAT ABILITIES/TALENTS DO I HAVE?

IN THE SPACE BELOW, WRITE DOWN YOUR TOP ABILITIES/TALENTS:

WHAT HAVE MY EXPERIENCES BEEN?

MY POSITIVE LIFE EXPERIENCES HAVE BEEN:

AREAS THAT I FEEL I COULD HELP ANOTHER PERSON:

MY PAINFUL LIFE EXPERIENCES HAVE BEEN:

THE AREAS GOD HAS HELPED ME THROUGH THAT I FEEL I COULD HELP ANOTHER PERSON:

WHOM OR WHAT DO I HAVE A PASSION FOR?

WHOM OR WHAT DO I HAVE A PASSION FOR (KIDS, ADULTS, PEOPLE IN NEED, STUDENTS, MUSIC, HOBBIES, INTERESTS, ETC...)?:

WHAT NEEDS DO I LIKE TO MEET FOR OTHERS?:

WHAT ARE MY GIFTS?

IN THE SPACE BELOW, WRITE DOWN THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS YOU BELIEVE GOD HAS GIVEN YOU:

HOW CAN I SERVE OTHERS?

BASED ON WHAT I KNOW ABOUT MYSELF, WHAT ARE SOME IDEAS AND AREAS I SHOULD EXPLORE ABOUT SERVING?:

APPENDIX | SERVE EXPERIENCE

Together your group will commit to meeting a need by planning a serve project in order to live out connecting others to Christ, Community, and Calling. Serving others as a group is less about fulfilling an obligation and more about who God is shaping you and your group to be.

FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW

Needs & Opportunities Chart: Start with the question, “Who do we know that has a need?” This could be a family member, friend, neighbor, ministry, or organization. Write down the answer to this question in the Needs column on the chart. The next question is, “How can we help?” Your group could do yard work, serve meals, move items, paint, spend time with people, provide a gift, purchase groceries, buy clothes, replace an appliance, pay bills, and the list could go on. Write down the opportunities you have to meet specific needs in the Opportunities column on the chart.

Choose Which Need To Meet: Discuss your list as a group and see if there’s any overwhelming sense of unity around one option. Depending on the needs, you may even be able to accomplish more than one.

Make A Plan: Finalize your plan on when, where, and how your group will meet the need(s).

Groups That Serve: Some needs and projects may include financial costs your group can’t support. This is where Groups That Serve comes in. This is a resource specifically designed for Life Groups to help fund serve projects. You can learn more about applying for funds for a group serve project at www.mynorthside.com/groupsthatserve.

Serve: Once everything is in motion, it’s time to serve. Remember to serve relationally. Encourage those whose needs you are meeting and be ready to share why your group is serving (spoiler alert...it’s Jesus). Love them well!

Capture The Moment & Share The Story: If it fits, take a photo or video of your group serving. Share your story on the Group Leader Facebook Group. If partnering with Groups That Serve, follow the steps to submit your story.

Debrief: At your next group meeting, discuss what encouraged or challenged you from the experience. Have a conversation on what next steps toward a lifestyle of serving would look like as a group or individually.

NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

NEEDS:	OPPORTUNITIES:
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APPENDIX | GROUP LEADER TIPS

In this appendix you will find a variety of leader tips that apply to all different types of groups. Some focus on group leading and others on various aspects of the *Connecting The Unconnected* study. Read through them all or focus on the ones you need for your group.

ENCOURAGING YOUR GROUP TO DIVE INTO THE DAILY DEVOTIONS:

For *Connecting The Unconnected*, we recommend that each group member have a copy (physical or digital) of the study guide. A major component of the study are the daily devotions. At the start of the study, make sure you take a moment to discuss the daily devotions.

- Let your group know that the goal is to give God 1-2% of your day which is (15-30 minutes).
- Remind them this is about a relationship, not homework. God wants to work through them to enrich the group. In other words, when they share what God is doing in their lives it brings value to the group.
- Discuss your plans for daily devotions. Ask everyone to share when they plan on completing the devotions. Write the plans down, because it can help you encourage them throughout the study.
- Discuss what might be standing in the way of being consistent in doing the daily devotions. Talk about how you can keep each other accountable as a group. As the leader, plan to send some texts throughout the study as reminders to keep at it.
- Don't skip the TAKE IT IN section of each group discussion. This question helps people discuss what they are learning and provides a little accountability each week.

While you can't force everyone to do daily devotions, you can reinforce that your group is about growing in faith. No other habit will do more to transform them into Jesus than studying and living out the Bible. Encourage and occasionally lovingly annoy them with next steps of discipleship.

PREPARE TO LEAD:

Your leadership comes from your relationship with God. Carve out some time to review the study by reading through the scriptures and questions. This preparation helps you answer what God is trying to teach you and better understand how you would answer the questions.

MAKE CHANGES TO THE STUDY:

Every study ever written was not written with your group in mind. The *Connecting The Unconnected* study was designed with more questions than your group can probably get

through. You might need to cut or add different questions. Adjust the study as needed to best fit the dynamics of your group.

PRAY FOR YOUR GROUP:

During the week, pray for your group. Pray over any requests and/or for each member. You might be the only person that is specifically praying for some people in your group. If you want to see growth and God's presence in your group, it begins with prayer.

THE GOALS OF GROUP DISCUSSION:

The main goals of your group discussion are to read the Bible together, and have every group member engage in the discussion. From there, we trust the Holy Spirit to work. The study will create opportunities for Bible reading, and here are some tips for developing discussion.

- Not everyone has to answer every question. Every question will resonate differently with each person. Some will be ready to answer while others won't.
- People need time to process a question. It's okay to let the silence linger while you wait for responses.
- Be able to answer the questions. This is where your prep time helps. If needed, get the ball rolling with a thought or story. You set the tone as the leader.
- Ask follow-up questions. Always be ready to ask a follow up question like...
 - "What's the reason behind that?"
 - "Can you explain more?"
 - "I think there's a story behind that..."
- Watch the people in your group, and encourage members to join in if they haven't. You could say something like...
 - "Let's hear from some others who haven't shared"
 - "Let's hear from this side of the group"
 - "Could you read the question and start us with your answer?"
- If someone continues to sit quietly and not engage in the discussion, you may want to connect with them privately. Encourage and remind them that their input brings value to the group.

GIVE SOMETHING AWAY (MAKE DISCIPLES GROUPS STYLE):

At the heart of the *Connecting The Unconnected* study is making disciples. The community of a group is one of the best places to grow as a follower of Jesus. In groups, you can practice and get comfortable with spiritual habits and discussing faith. If you are not comfortable doing these things with believers, it will be hard to do so with those who are unconnected to Jesus. During the *Connecting The Unconnected* study, remind your group that your community is a place to grow. As a leader, work on making disciples by giving aspects of the group away. Here are some potential ideas:

Ask group members to rotate snacks	Ask group members to read discussion questions	Ask group members to read Scripture
Ask group members to help with parts of the Communion Experience	Ask a group member to plan the Serve Experience	Ask a group member to write down and communicate prayer requests
Ask group members to close in prayer	Ask group members to rotate homes for meeting (if applicable)	Ask groups members to lead some or all of a session

YOUR FIRST MEETING:

The underlying goal of your first group meeting is to begin building relationships and communicating the purpose/expectations. With that in mind, don't worry if you don't make it through all of Session 1 of *Connecting The Unconnected*. Here are some ideas surrounding your first meeting...

- Before you meet, make sure everyone in your group knows the logistics (when, where, etc...). Also, build the hype and encourage everyone to be excited for the journey ahead.
- You may want to host a group meeting the week before starting the *Connecting The Unconnected* study to create some extra space to build relationships.
- Everyone joins a group for a different reason. At your first meeting, take a moment to discuss the why behind groups and the logistics to help get everyone on the same page.
- Have everyone program your group meetings into their calendar.
- If meeting in person, discuss if you will rotate snacks, homes, etc...
- Gather everyone's contact information (phone, email, birthdays, etc...). Send this information out to the group.
- Remind everyone to let you know if they will be late or miss a meeting.
- Have some fun and take a group photo to celebrate the moment and start of your group.

APPENDIX - GETTING TO KNOW YOU ACTIVITY:

This activity is designed to help new groups get to know one another and build community. Even though it is meant for new groups, existing groups are welcome to use it. You can introduce the activity during Session 1 of *Connecting The Unconnected*. Let your group know that the plan is for each person to fill out the activity and share a little bit of their story throughout the study. Depending on the size of the group, schedule out times over Sessions 2-7 for each person to share their story. This will give everyone time to prepare. We recommend leaders going first to show examples of how the activity works and what to do.

Depending on how long this takes each session, you may not need all of the questions under GET STARTED. Finally, the activity jokes about it, but we actually do recommend using a 5 minute timer. This will help keep everyone focused and succinct in their stories. It may also create some great speed talking countdown moments!

APPENDIX - COMMUNION EXPERIENCE:

The heart behind taking communion together is reminding everyone why you are gathering. You are all connected because of Jesus. The PREPARE section of this Appendix tackles 4 big questions surrounding this experience. As a leader, here are a few more things to think about...

- At the end of Session 3, begin a discussion on your plans for the communion experience. Have group members turn to the appendix (pg. 131) and talk about it together.
- If someone in your group hasn't taken the step of faith of accepting Jesus as their Savior and Lord, they may feel a little uncomfortable through this moment. Love and encourage them. Let them know that it is okay if they do not feel comfortable taking communion. Encourage them to listen and reflect and celebrate God's presence in their lives. Love them well!
- Leading up to Session 4, ask some group members to participate (reading scripture, praying, etc...). Asking in advance gives people time to prepare if it is out of their comfort zone.
- During the prayer moments, you may want to play some worship music in the background.

APPENDIX - SERVE EXPERIENCE:

The heart behind the serve experience is for your group to live out connecting to Christ, community, and calling by serving others. Think of a candle versus a bonfire. On your own, you will shine a light. Together you will burn brightly. As you plan out your serve experience, here are a few tips...

- At the end of Session 5, begin a discussion on your plans for the serve experience. Have group members turn to the Appendix (pg. 136) and talk about it together.
- Introduce and review the Needs & Opportunities Chart. You can encourage group members to write some ideas in this chart during the week, and discuss it at the next group session. Or, you can tackle this chart during a group session if there is time.
- Serve projects don't have to be grandiose. But, feel free to think big. Projects can be anything from helping someone in need with groceries or yard work. You could also connect with a local organization (nursing home, community center, etc...).
- Your group does not have to use Groups That Serve for funding your project. If your group does request funds through Groups That Serve, remember there will be a little bit of a delay with the approval process and picking up the gift card.
- If you get stuck on serve project ideas, reach out to the Local Outreach ministry at Northside.

APPENDIX - HOW AM I CREATED TO SERVE OTHERS:

This is a simple tool to help your group members think through how they are wired to serve. It is introspective and Holy Spirit led. The goal of the exercise is to help people realize they are already equipped and guide them towards opportunities to serve others. Your group will encounter this appendix as a next step in the LIVE IT OUT section of Session 6.

- It is an optional exercise that group members can complete on their own.
- You could have members complete the exercise before Session 6 and let it help fuel some discussion.
- You could have members complete the exercise after Session 6 and let it help fuel discussion during Session 7.
- Group members can find specific serve opportunities at www.mynorthside.com/serve.

APPENDIX - GROUP NEXT STEPS:

Towards the end of the *Connecting The Unconnected* study, we want to encourage every new group to discuss what's next! This Appendix is designed to help guide that conversation. As you prepare for this discussion, here are some things to think about...

- If you are going to tackle this discussion during your normal group time, make sure you adjust the *Connecting The Unconnected* study accordingly. Don't rush this conversation.
- You could plan a group pitch-in after the *Connecting The Unconnected* study to discuss what's next.
- If your group plans to continue, you do not have to decide on the next study during this conversation. Collect some ideas, and follow up on them during the week.
- If there will be a break between the end of the *Connecting The Unconnected* study and what's next, make sure your group members know the dates of when you will resume meeting.
- If you are not continuing on, this group still served as seven weeks of community for everyone. Celebrate the season, and discuss everyone's next steps for ongoing community.

APPENDIX | GROUP NEXT STEPS

During Session 6 or 7 of *Connecting The Unconnected* is a great moment to talk about where your group goes next! As another idea, you could even plan a group pitch-in after completing the study to celebrate the season and talk about what's next. Regardless, our hope is that your group decides to continue on in community.

TO HELP GUIDE THIS CONVERSATION, READ THROUGH AND DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING AS A GROUP.

Groups matter because God designed us to grow in relationships. The heart of every group is to create an environment where spiritual growth happens. Read through the best practices of a successful group environment below. **Which of the practices stand out to you as being particularly important? Why?**

STUDY GOD'S WORD:

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,"¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

- Relevant Studies: Groups choose engaging studies based on spiritual needs and God's leading to grow together.
- Join the Discussion: Group members come ready to join the discussion to share what God is teaching them. As a group, it's not about having all the answers but a willingness to seek them together.

SHARE YOUR LIVES:

"We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too." **1 Thessalonians 2:8 (NLT)**

- Be Real: The atmosphere should encourage openness and transparency among members. This is an environment where people should feel free to be themselves.
- Connection and Consistency: We can't grow spiritually without connecting relationally. Consistency is essential for cultivating relationships with God and one another. Group members attend regularly and connect beyond normal group time.

SUPPORT EACH OTHER:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:34-35

- **Provide Care:** Group members choose to be present, celebrate, pray for, and support one another.
- **Provide Confidentiality:** To build authenticity, members must be able to trust that issues discussed within the group will not be shared outside the group.

TAKE NEXT STEPS:

“He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.” **Colossians 1:28**

- **Share Ownership:** Group members encourage one another to participate in ownership of the group (snacks, hosting, leading, discussing, praying, etc.).
- **Celebrate Steps:** Group members encourage and challenge each other to take next steps of faith (big or small). As this happens, the group will celebrate every step toward Jesus.

TALK IT OVER:

Take a moment to dream about what your group could be in the next season of your lives.

What does it look like if our group continued intentionally creating an environment of Study, Share, Support, and Steps?

Do we want to continue as a group for another season?

If so:

- What logistics do we need to discuss (when/where, kidcare, etc.)?
- What topics would you like to study next as a group?
- Add your continuing group meetings to your calendar.

If not:

- How can we celebrate the end of this season of grouping (i.e., cookout, desserts, restaurant, etc.)?
- What is your next step to reconnect with a different group or ongoing community?

APPENDIX: HOW TO STAY CONNECTED

CONGRATULATIONS ON COMPLETING THE CONNECTING THE UNCONNECTED STUDY!

We hope this isn't the end, but the start of a new or renewed commitment to live connected to Jesus. To help you take your next steps, we've created some discipleship tracks designed to deepen your relationship with Jesus and equip you to help others do the same.

As you've learned throughout this study, the best way to grow is in community. If you're already part of a group, we encourage you to continue meeting and walking through a discipleship track together. If you're not yet in a group, we'd love to help you find one that fits. Visit mynorthside.com/groupfinder to explore group options. While groups may not all follow the same discipleship track, each one will support you as you grow.

If you're not able to find a group that fits, a discipleship track will be offered through Northside U as part of our Spiritual Growth Track. Most classes meet on Tuesday evenings at Northside, and you can learn more at mynorthside.com/northsideu.

If you are unable to connect to community this season, we also have a discipleship track that you can follow on your own.

The QR Code below will connect you to these discipleship resources. We encourage you to continue on this journey of living connected to Jesus and helping connect the unconnected to Christ, community, and calling!





Group Discussions

Andy Clark, Rick Vieira,
and Roy Roberson

Daily Devotions & Family Conversations

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