

CONNECT

One of the greatest misconceptions about following Jesus is that we can do it alone. While a relationship with Christ is deeply personal, it was never meant to be isolated. From the very beginning, God created us for relationship - with Himself and with one another. We grow stronger, wiser, and more like Jesus when we intentionally walk alongside other believers.

Jesus never called people to simply believe in Him from a distance. He invited them into a community. He gathered twelve disciples, shared life with them, taught them, challenged them, encouraged them, and sent them out together. The early church continued that pattern, devoting themselves to fellowship, praying together, serving one another, and carrying each other's burdens. They understood that spiritual growth happens best in the context of authentic relationships.

Connect

choosing authentic community over isolated faith

Connection is more than attending the same church or recognizing familiar faces on Sunday morning. It is allowing yourself to be known, encouraged, challenged, prayed for, and cared for by other followers of Jesus. It is choosing vulnerability over isolation and belonging over simply observing.

Over the next five days, you'll discover why biblical community is essential to your spiritual growth and how God uses relationships to shape your faith. As you read, ask God to help you move beyond simply attending church and toward building meaningful relationships with His people. You were never meant to follow Jesus alone, and some of God's greatest work in your life will happen through the people He places beside you.

Remember...

The goal isn't simply to build more friendships.

The goal is to become more like Jesus.

Day 1

You Were Not Meant to Be Alone

Scripture: Hebrews 10:24–25

The writer of Hebrews reminds believers that following Christ involves living life with others—encouraging one another, praying for one another, and carrying each other's burdens. These aren't optional extras for spiritually mature Christians; they're part of God's design for every believer. Throughout Scripture we see the same pattern. Jesus gathered disciples instead of sending them out to figure out faith on their own. Paul filled his letters with instructions about loving, serving, forgiving, and encouraging one another. God's plan has always been for His people to grow together.

Application

One of the most important ways we follow Jesus is to intentionally **Connect** with His people. Our culture celebrates independence, teaching us to rely on ourselves and avoid needing others. That mindset can quietly shape our faith, causing us to believe spiritual growth is simply between "Jesus and me." But God designed us for community. We all have blind spots we can't see on our own. We all face seasons of discouragement, and we all need people who will remind us of God's truth and encourage us to keep following Jesus. At the same time, God wants to use us to strengthen the faith of others.

Every time you intentionally Connect, you take another step in following Jesus.

Reflection

- Who has been one of the greatest spiritual influences in your life?
- What is one step you could take this week to build a deeper connection with another believer?

Prayer

Father, thank You for creating me to live in community with other believers. Open my heart to the relationships You want to build in my life, and help me encourage others as we grow together in following Jesus. Amen.

Day 2

From Attending to Belonging

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

The first church wasn't built around an event—it was built around relationships. Acts 2 gives us a beautiful picture of the kind of community God desires for His people. They worshiped together, learned together, prayed together, shared meals together, cared for one another, and celebrated God's work together. Their faith wasn't confined to a weekly gathering; it shaped the way they lived every day. This wasn't accidental. They intentionally chose to belong to one another because they first belonged to Christ.

Application

One of the most important ways we follow Jesus is to intentionally **Connect** with His people. There's an important difference between attending church and belonging to a church. Attendance means showing up. Belonging means becoming part of the family. You can faithfully attend every Sunday, know where to park, recognize familiar faces, sing the songs, and listen to the sermon without ever allowing anyone to truly know you. You can leave each week encouraged by the worship while still carrying life's greatest burdens alone. That isn't the picture we see in the New Testament. The early believers weren't simply consumers of a worship service. They were contributors to one another's spiritual growth. They shared meals in one another's homes. They prayed for one another. They celebrated together. They grieved together. When someone had a need, others stepped in to help. They lived with an awareness that following Jesus meant belonging to His people.

Every time you Connect, you are taking another intentional step in following Jesus.

Reflection

- If someone asked whether you belong to a church family or simply attend a church, how would you answer?
- What's one step you could take to become more connected to the people God has placed around you?

Prayer

Father, thank You for making me part of Your family through Jesus Christ. Forgive me for the times I've settled for simply attending instead of truly belonging. Give me the courage to take intentional steps toward deeper relationships with other believers. Help me become someone who welcomes others, encourages others, and faithfully invests in the community You've given me. Amen.

Day 3

Known, Not Hidden

Scripture: James 5:16

James describes a kind of community built on honesty and prayer. Instead of hiding struggles or trying to handle everything alone, believers are invited to open their lives to one another. Confession brings what is hidden into the light, while prayer reminds us that we don't have to carry one another's burdens in our own strength. God designed Christian community to be a place where people can be known, supported, prayed for, and encouraged toward healing.

Application

It's possible to be around people but never actually **Connect** with them. We can attend church, have conversations, and still keep the difficult parts of our lives hidden. But following Jesus was never intended to be something we do alone. **Connecting** requires more than proximity. It requires vulnerability. That doesn't mean telling everything to everyone. It means developing relationships with trusted followers of Jesus who know what is really happening in your life—people who can pray for you, encourage you, challenge you, and walk beside you when life gets difficult. Sometimes **Connecting** means being willing to say, "I need help." Other times, it means noticing when someone else needs you to show up for them. Either way, biblical community requires us to move toward one another instead of settling for isolation.

Every time you intentionally Connect, you are taking another intentional step in following Jesus.

Reflection

- Who in your life knows what you are really walking through right now?
- What is one step you could take this week to build a deeper, more honest connection with another follower of Jesus?

Prayer

Jesus, give me the courage to be honest and the wisdom to know who I can trust. Help me resist the temptation to isolate myself or hide what I'm carrying. Thank You for giving me people who can pray for me, encourage me, and help me follow You. Amen.

Day 4

Choosing Grace Over Offense

Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17

In Colossians 3:12–17, Paul describes what should characterize the lives of those who belong to Christ. Instead of anger, pride, and division, believers are called to clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. They are to forgive one another as Christ has forgiven them and allow His peace and Word to shape their relationships. These qualities aren't meant to be practiced in isolation but within the everyday relationships of the church. Healthy Christian community is built as God's people choose grace, forgiveness, and love every day.

Application

One of the most important ways we follow Jesus is to intentionally **Connect** with His people. Sooner or later, someone in church will disappoint or hurt you. When that happens, you have a choice. You can allow offense to create distance, or you can allow grace to preserve the relationship. Paul tells believers to "make allowance" for each other's faults. We should expect imperfection because every one of us is still growing. Healthy churches aren't filled with flawless people. They're filled with forgiven people who extend the same

grace they've received from Christ. That doesn't mean ignoring sin or avoiding hard conversations. It means speaking the truth with humility, kindness, and a desire for restoration. Every healthy relationship—and every healthy church—is built on forgiveness.

Every time you intentionally Connect, you are taking another intentional step in following Jesus.

Reflection

- Is there someone you've allowed disappointment to create distance from?
- What step could you take toward forgiveness or reconciliation this week?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for Your endless patience and forgiveness toward me. Help me extend that same grace to others. Guard my heart from bitterness, and teach me to pursue peace, unity, and reconciliation with others. Amen.

Day 5

Take the First Step

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

Solomon reminds us that life was never intended to be lived alone. Two people accomplish more because they work together, and when one falls, the other is there to help them up. The same is true in our walk with Christ. God uses other believers to strengthen us when we're weak, encourage us when we're discouraged, and help us remain faithful. Biblical community doesn't remove life's struggles, but it provides the support God designed us to have.

Application

One of the most important ways we follow Jesus is to intentionally **Connect** with His people. Deep friendships rarely happen overnight. They grow one conversation, one prayer, one shared meal, and one act of encouragement at a time. Many people wait until they feel connected before getting involved, but meaningful community usually works the other way around. Connection grows because we intentionally participate. Every friendship begins when someone says hello. Every Group begins when someone signs up. Every prayer partnership begins when someone asks, "Would you pray with me?" Small steps often lead to lifelong relationships. As you follow Jesus, remember that spiritual maturity isn't measured only by what you know, but also by how faithfully you love, encourage, serve, and walk alongside others.

Every time you intentionally Connect, you are taking another intentional step in following Jesus.

Reflection

- What is one step God is inviting you to take toward authentic Christian community?
- Who could you encourage or invite this week?

Prayer

Father, help me move beyond good intentions and take practical steps toward deeper relationships with other believers. As I **Connect** with others, continue shaping me into the likeness of Jesus. Amen.