

FALL 2019
Connect Group Study

Better Together



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A NOTE FROM Pastor Rick Lorimer

Welcome to Better Together, a 6-week study on biblical community. I am so excited that you decided to join me in this adventure. I am confident that we as a church family have a lot to learn about biblical community, and I'm excited for what God has planned in our lives.



Earlier this year, I shared with our church the focus for 2019. God is calling us to be a people of His Word, a people of His Spirit, and a people on His Mission. The word that can be unintentionally overlooked in this 2019 vision is the word “people.” God wants “us” to be a people moving in sync with one another. And that’s what these next 6 weeks are all about. In fact, no Christ Follower can truly fulfill his or her purpose without understanding biblical community. One is too small a number for greatness, but together we can be a community of faith that fulfills His purposes for our lives. Commit in your heart with me to God’s will and His work being done in you and our church.

I want to thank Rick Warren and Saddleback Church for providing us the template for such a rich Connect Group study.

We truly are better together!!!

USING YOUR STUDY GUIDE

In your Study Guide, we have some key sections that frame and outline our time together.

CONNECT Together: At the start of each group meeting, this section will help us break the ice and get to know each other.

GROW Together: This section has three parts that are designed to help us grow.

A weekly **MEMORY VERSE** that we're each going to memorize. Trust me - there's power when we make the time to internalize God's word by memorizing it.



A weekly **VIDEO LESSON**, which you can follow along with in the study guide.



And weekly **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS** dedicated to facilitate a deeper understanding of the Bible and help you consider how the truths of Scripture can impact your life.

SERVE Together: During this time, you will discuss how you can use your God-given talents to serve others in God's family. Each week it will look different and as a group, you'll choose what to focus on.

SHARE Together: This is designed to give you and your group suggestions and exercises for sharing the love of Christ with others.

WORSHIP Together: Don't be intimidated by this. Rather, get excited about an opportunity to see God move as we exchange prayer requests and grow in our personal prayer lives.

DAILY DEVOTIONS: In between each of our weekly Connect Group sessions, you will find daily devotions included in this study guide.

Join me in making these daily devotions a priority. If you're like me, you may already have a reading plan, but I'm intentionally doing these daily devotions first.

To aid in our devotions, we will be using the S.O.A.P. method. S.O.A.P. is an acronym for Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer. There's something powerful when we are all moving in the same direction. I am confident that you will see the beauty and magnitude of God's greatness when we move in unison and truly practice being God's church.

HOW TO S.O.A.P.

S — Scripture

Open your Bible to your reading for the day. Take time reading and allow God to speak to you. When you are done, look for a verse that particularly spoke to you that day, and write it in your journal.

O — Observation

What do you think God is saying to the audience He is addressing in this text? Consider looking at the scriptures before and after this passage.? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you.

A — Application

Personalize what you have read by asking yourself how it applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, a new promise, or corrections for a particular area of your life. Write how this scripture can apply to you today.

P — Prayer

This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this scripture, or even a prayer for a greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say! Now, write it out.

What Matters Most

CONNECT Together

10 Minutes

1. Give everyone a chance to introduce themselves and share how they came to be a part of this group.
2. Love is defined in many ways by our culture. How would you define love?

GROW Together

35 Minutes

MEMORY VERSE: “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” John 13:35 (NLT)



VIDEO LESSON: Watch now and follow along in outline.

WHAT MATTERS MOST

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.” Galatians 5:6 (ESV)

“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is

not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”
1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 (NIV)

Five Radical Statements About Love... If I don't live a life of love:

1. Nothing I _____ will matter.
“If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth, but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal.”
1 Corinthians 13:1 (NLT)
2. Nothing I _____ will matter.
“I may have the gift of prophecy. I may understand all the secret things of God and have all knowledge... but if I do not have love, then I am nothing.” 1 Corinthians 13:2 (NCV)
3. Nothing I _____ will matter.
“Even if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, I would still be worth nothing at all without love.” 1 Corinthians 13:2b (LB)
4. Nothing I _____ will matter.
“If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body... but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.” 1 Corinthians 13:3 (NLT)

5. Nothing I _____ will matter.
“No matter what I say, what I believe, or what I do, I’m bankrupt without love.” 1 Corinthians 13:3b (MSG)

WHAT IS LOVE?

- Love is a **command**.
“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” John 13:34 (NIV)
- Love is a **choice**.
“Go after a life of love as if your life depended on it— because it does.” 1 Corinthians 14:1 (MSG)
- Love is a **conduct**.
“Let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them and show it by our actions.” 1 John 3:18 (LB)
- Love is a **commitment**.
“God is love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God and he will stay one with us.” 1 John 4:16b (CEV)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. First Corinthians 13:1-3 makes five radical statements about love. They are the first five fill-ins of your outline. Which statement strikes you the most? Why?
2. *First Corinthians 14:1 (MSG) says, “Go after a life of love as if your life depended on it— because it does.”*

On a practical day-to-day level, what does it mean to “go after a life of love?” What are some steps you can take to live this way?

SERVE Together

10 Minutes

One way to “go after” a life of love is to show appreciation to others. Is there a worker in our church who needs to be shown appreciation? As a group, choose either a church staff member or Dream Team volunteer who you could affirm this week. You might select a greeter, usher, a kid’s worker, an administrative assistant, or a youth worker—someone who is involved in serving at Christ Place. Discuss ways your group can show love and appreciation to that person this week, such as a gift certificate to their favorite store or restaurant or a thank you signed by everyone in your group. Determine who in your group will handle the details. Then, as a group, make plans to present your appreciation gift to the person you chose.

SHARE Together

10 Minutes

1. Use the Circles of Life diagram on page 72 to share the love of Christ this week. Share with someone you have been meaning to call or visit, or someone you need to invite to church. Commit to doing something for that person this week. Tell your Connect Group who the person is and what you will do: send an email, make a call, write a letter, buy a little gift, take them out for coffee, or invite them to join your Connect Group next week.
2. At the end of his message, Pastor Rick asked you to begin discussing a project your whole group can do together to reach out to your community with the love of Christ, particularly in the areas of assisting the poor, caring for the sick, and reaching the lost. This project may become one big event we do or something we choose to do weekly. We’ll talk about this in greater detail next week, but we just want to get it on your radar in this session.

Start discussing the idea right now. Why is it important for you as a group to reach out to your community?

HOST TIP: To maximize prayer time and allow greater opportunity for personal sharing, break into subgroups of three or four people. This is especially important if your Connect Group has more than eight members.

1. In a simple, one-sentence prayer, take a few moments to thank God for His love. If praying aloud with people is new or awkward for you, feel free to pray silently.
2. One of the best ways to show each other love is to pray for each other. Share your prayer requests with your Connect Group and take time to pray together. Be sure to pray for friends and loved ones who do not have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Record the prayer requests on the Connect Group Prayer and Praise Report in the back of your study guide. Keeping track of group prayer requests and answers to prayer would be a great job for someone in your group. Any volunteers for a Prayer Coordinator?

We're Compelled To Love God's Family

Because God Loves Us

WEEK 1
DAY 2

BIG IDEA: Life is about learning to love Scripture.

S — Scripture - 1 John 4:11 (NIV)

"Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Evaluate how comfortable you are with being in a Better Together Connect Group. Why do you feel this way?

BIG IDEA: Love is an act of the will of Scripture.

S — Scripture - John 13:34 (NIV)

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Identify how you can show the love of Christ to an unlovable person in your life today.

BIG IDEA: We love God by loving others.

S — Scripture - 1 John 4:20 (GW)

“People who don't love other believers, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Consider the way you show love to others speaks volumes about the way you feel about the God who created them.

BIG IDEA: Loving other believers is evidence that we belong to God's family.

S — Scripture - 1 John 13:34 (NIV)

"If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Imagine you were put on trial for your faith, and your expressions of love were the only evidence. What would be the verdict?

BIG IDEA: Love must be learned.

S — Scripture - 1 Peter 2:17 (NCV)

Show respect for all people: Love your brothers and sisters in God's family, respect God, honor the king."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Honestly evaluate how devoted you are to your church family.

BIG IDEA: The whole world is watching how we love one another.

S — Scripture - 1 John 13:34 (NIV)

"If we love our brothers and sisters who are believers, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Understanding that we all can improve, consider how you can improve in loving others like Christ loves them.

Reaching Out Together

CONNECT Together

10 Minutes

1. Welcome any people who are new to your group this week.
2. Check your progress on last week's group assignment to show love and appreciation to a church staff member or volunteer.
3. How are you progressing with your personal commitment from last week to reach out to someone with the love of Jesus Christ? Did you get started? If so, how did it go?
4. Would anyone like to tell the group about an answer to prayer or something they are learning from their Better Together daily devotional readings? Be sure to record answers to prayer in the Connect Group Prayer and Praise Report.

GROW Together

35 Minutes

MEMORY VERSE: *"Be wise in the way you act with people who are not believers, making the most of every opportunity." Colossians 4:5 (NCV)*



VIDEO LESSON: Watch now and follow along in outline.

REACHING OUT TOGETHER

“Love is kind.” 1 Corinthians 13:4 (NIV)

“Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.” 1 John 3:18 (NLT)

“When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.” 1 Corinthians 13:11 (NLT)

“Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.” Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.” Mark 6:36-44 (NIV)

- Recognize the _____.
“You give them something to eat.” Mark 6:37 (NIV)

*“‘How many loaves do you have?’ he asked. ‘Go and see.’”
Mark 6:38*

- Take _____.
“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV)

- Get _____.
“Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties.” Mark 6:39-40 (NIV)

- Be _____.
“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” James 1:22 (NIV)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HOST TIPS: If your group has eight or more members, we suggest you break into subgroups of three or four people for greater participation and deeper discussion. At the end of the discussion time, come back together and have someone from each group report on the highlights of their discussions.

This week there are just two questions in this section because we want you to spend more of your discussion time working on the Share Together section of the study.

1. James 1:22 tells us it's not enough just to know truth. We have to put it into practice. And 2 Corinthians 9:13 says our deeds should be "as good as our doctrine." What does this mean on a practical level? How do these truths relate to sharing your faith?
2. Pastor Rick said, "God wants to use your Connect Group to reach the world for Jesus Christ. If you want to know God's plan for solving the world's problems, look around the room. You're it. You are God's plan... God works through his people—through physical, tangible demonstrations of compassion, mercy and care." What do you think about that statement? Does it excite you, scare you, or overwhelm you? Why?

HOST TIP: There will be no Serve Together questions this week. We want you to focus the rest of your time on the Share Together section of your study.

SHARE Together

20 Minutes

God wants to use your Connect Group to reach out to the world for Jesus Christ. To discover how, follow the three steps from Pastor Rick's message this week:

1. Recognize the need. What physical, emotional and spiritual needs do people have in our community? Take inventory. What talents, abilities, experiences, and resources are available in your group to help meet the need you have selected? See www.christplace.church/connect for ideas.
2. Get organized. Determine how much time your project will take and what kind of resources will be required. Make a plan. Figure out a timeline, divide up responsibilities, and assign tasks.
3. Be available. The key to being available is always about the heart. Let's go directly to our Worship Together section to prepare our hearts.

WORSHIP Together

10 Minutes

1. Prepare your heart. The Bible says in 1 Chronicles 29:14 that everything we have was given by God. In silent or spoken prayer, thank God for what he has given you and then offer it back to him to do with as he will.
2. Be available. Romans 12:1 tells us to worship God by offering our bodies to him as living sacrifices. In prayer, offer yourselves to God. Ask him to give you strength and courage to step out in faith as you join together in your community outreach project.
3. Pray for each other's prayer requests. Pray especially for the people you are inviting to come to your Connect Group or church with you. Be sure your Prayer Coordinator records the group's prayer requests on the Connect Group Prayer and Praise Report page in the back of your guide.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Was anyone missing from your group this week? If someone was absent, ask for a volunteer from the group to call or email that person and let them know they were missed. It's very important for people to know they are cared about.

BIG IDEA: Make the most of every opportunity to share the gospel.

S — Scripture - Colossians 4:5 (NCV)

“Be wise in the way you act with people who are not believers, making the most of every opportunity.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Consider if anybody will be in heaven because of you and your faith.

We're Commissioned To Reach Out Together

WEEK 2
DAY 10

By Using Our Connect Group

BIG IDEA: "We" is more powerful than "me."

S — Scripture - Philippians 1:27 (CEV)

"You are working together and struggling side by side to get others to believe the good news."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Identify a friend and/or family member your Connect Group can begin praying for.

We're Commissioned To Reach Out Together

WEEK 2
DAY 11

By Showing Acceptance

BIG IDEA: God wants you to accept others just like Jesus accepts you.

S — Scripture - Romans 15:7 (MSG)

“Reach out and welcome one another to God’s glory. Jesus did it; now you do it!”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Consider how your acceptance could build a bridge to Christ for an un-churched person in your life.

BIG IDEA: Love the people of the world, but not the values of the world.

S — Scripture - Romans 12:16 (CEV)

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

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Evaluate whether or not you have any meaningful friendships with any un-churched people.

BIG IDEA: People know we love them when we show we love them.

S — Scripture - 1 John 3:18 (LB)

“Little children, let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Identify who you can share the love of Christ with in a practical way today.

BIG IDEA: We bear the image of God everywhere we go.

S — Scripture - Genesis 1:26 (NLT)

“Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Consider how you can better represent Jesus in your world today.

Belonging Together

CONNECT Together

10 Minutes

1. Check your progress on your Connect Group outreach project. Are your plans coming together? Are there any loose ends that need to be tied down?
2. Who has blessed you by meeting a practical need in your life? How did their kindness make you feel?

GROW Together

35 Minutes

MEMORY VERSE: *“Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.”*
Romans 12:5b (NLT) Colossians 4:5 (NCV)



VIDEO LESSON: Watch now and follow along in outline.

BELONGING TOGETHER

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up... though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands in not quickly broken.” Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35 (NIV)

"It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."
1 Corinthians 13:7 (NIV)

Lessons on Love from 1 Corinthians 13:7

1. Love always _____.
"A gossip betrays a confidence but a trustworthy man keeps a secret." Proverbs 11:13 (NIV)
Protects = _____
2. Love always _____.
We believe _____ each other. We believe
_____ each other.
3. Love always _____.
This is a joyful hope that anticipates God's deliverance. This love wants your friends to succeed. They will be excited about your accomplishments without making you feel bad about your successes.

This hope that loves knows how to be _____
about other people's accomplishments.
4. Love always _____.
"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Proverbs 17:17 (ESV)

"Some friendships do not last, but some friends are more loyal than brothers." Proverbs 18:24 (GNB)

"Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor." Romans 12:10 (ESV)

"In Christ, we who are many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." Romans 12:5 (NIV)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HOST TIP: If your group has eight or more members, we suggest you break into subgroups of three or four people for greater participation and deeper discussion.

1. Which of the four statements about love from 1 Corinthians 13:7 spoke to you most powerfully? Why? How can you apply these truths to your personal life this week?
2. What can we do to apply these truths to our group life? What does it mean to really trust each other and to persevere in our relationships together?
3. Talk about a time when you needed the faith of your friends to lift you in prayer, or a time when God answered your prayers for someone else.
4. Have one or two group members share their story of how they came to Christ and the role friendship played in their decision.

SERVE Together

10 Minutes

1. A recent survey revealed that the number one characteristic of a growing church is the atmosphere of love among the members. How would you describe the atmosphere of love in our church (welcoming, warm, safe, impersonal, cliquy, etc.)? What can your Connect Group do to help build a more loving community in our church?
2. Have you made a membership commitment to Christ Place Church by attending Growth Track? If not, what is holding you back?

SHARE Together

10 Minutes

1. Your group outreach project can be a great conversation starter for inviting seekers as well as Christ-following friends to join your Connect Group. When people express interest or curiosity about your project, invite them to join you at

your next group meeting to find out more about it. Who can you tell about your group outreach project this week?

2. Think of a friend who is not currently connected to a church. Why not invite that person to come to church with you this weekend? What is the worst thing that could happen if you invite them? What is the best thing that could happen if you invite them? Is the potential benefit worth the risk? Remember, over 90% of Christians first went to church because a friend or family member invited them. Tell your group the name of at least one person who you will invite to church or to your next Connect Group meeting.

Name: _____

Name: _____

WORSHIP Together

10 Minutes

1. Would anyone like to share an answer to prayer from last week? Be sure to record answers to prayers in the Connect Group Prayer and Praise Report (page 71).
2. Pray for your Connect Group outreach project.
3. Love requires us to believe in each other and for each other. Pair up with a spiritual partner for the rest of your prayer time. A spiritual partner is someone we can talk to about our spiritual growth and “call for back-up” when we need prayer support. Take a moment to select someone in your group to be your spiritual partner for the remaining weeks of this study. (We strongly recommend that men partner with men, and women partner with women.) After you have paired up, pray for each other’s requests. Plan to check in with each other by phone, email, or over coffee at least once before your next Connect Group meeting. This could be a great time to pray for each other during the coming week and share what you are learning from your Better Together daily devotional readings.

We're Chosen To Fellowship Together

By Admitting Our Need for Each Other

WEEK 3
DAY 16

BIG IDEA: I need other believers in my life and they need me.

S — Scripture - Romans 12:5 (NLT)

“Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Identify what might be keeping you from making a deeper commitment to your Connect Group.

We're Chosen To Fellowship Together

By Committing to Each Other

WEEK 3
DAY 17

BIG IDEA: Community is built through our commitment to each other.

S — Scripture - Romans 14:19 (MSG)

“Let us agree to use all our energy in getting along with each other.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Ask a good friend what (or who) they think you're committed to. Consider their answer and use it to honestly evaluate your priorities.

BIG IDEA: Respecting each other begins with gaining a godly perspective and seeing others the way God sees them.

S — Scripture - Romans 12:10 (GW)

“Excel on showing respect for each other.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Identify what it looks like for you to show respect to others, even when it's challenging.

We're Chosen To Fellowship Together

WEEK 3
DAY 19

By Supporting Each Other

BIG IDEA: God enables us to love the fear out of one another.

S — Scripture - Romans 14:19 (MSG)

“Let us agree to use all our energy in getting along with each other.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Ask a good friend what (or who) they think you're committed to. Consider their answer and use it to honestly evaluate your priorities.

BIG IDEA: When you learn someone's story and understand their perspective, you are able to become more patient with that person.

S — Scripture - Ephesians 4:2 (NLT)

"Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Evaluate how you can become more patient with the people in your life.

BIG IDEA: Our honesty strengthens the entire community.

S — Scripture - Ephesians 4:25 (MSG)

"No more lies, no more pretense. Tell you brother the truth. In Christ's body we're all connected to each other. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself."

O — Observation

A — Application

NEXT STEPS: Identify which temptation you are more likely to struggle with: lies of commission (making false statements) or lies of omission (not telling the whole truth).

CONNECT Together

10 Minutes

1. Have you had a chance to invite a friend to church or to your Connect Group yet? How did they respond?
2. Check the progress of your group outreach project.
3. Who have been some of the greatest examples of Christian love for you?

GROW Together

35 Minutes

MEMORY VERSE: *“Encourage one another and build each other up.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)*



VIDEO LESSON: Watch now and follow along in outline.

GROWING TOGETHER

1. Growing together requires _____.
*“Love is patient...it is not rude...it is not easily angered.”
1 Corinthians 13:4-5 (NIV)*

“A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.” Proverbs 19:11 (NIV)

“Be humble and gentle in every way. Be patient with each other and lovingly accept each other.” Ephesians 4:2 (GW)

2. Growing together requires _____.

Speak the Truth in Love

- a. Check your _____.
“Why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own?... First get rid of the log in your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.”
Matthew 7:3-5 (NLT)

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Proverbs 27:6 (KJV)

- b. Plan your _____.
- i. Plan _____
you’ll say it.
“The right word at the right time is like precious gold set in silver.”
Proverbs 25:11 (CEV)
 - ii. Plan _____ you’ll
say.
“A wise friend’s kind reprimand is like a gold ring slipped on your finger.”
Proverbs 25:12 (MSG)
 - iii. Plan _____ you’ll
say it.
“Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal.” Proverbs 12:18 (TEV)

“A soft answer turns away wrath.”
Proverbs 15:1a (NKJV)

Consider lowering your voice. It lowers the tension.

- c. _____.
“If someone is trapped in sin, you should gently lead that person back to the right path.”
Galatians 6:1 (CEV)

*“An honest answer is a sign of a true friendship.”
Proverbs 24:26 (TEV)*

3. Growing together requires _____.
“Love keeps no record of wrongs.” 1 Corinthians 13:5b (NIV)

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Colossians 3:13 (NIV)

*“In the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”
Matthew 7:2 (NIV)*

“There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.” James 2:13 (NLT)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HOST TIP: If your group has eight or more members, we suggest you break into subgroups of three or four people for greater participation and deeper discussion. At the end of the discussion time, come back together and have someone from each group report on the highlights of their discussions.

1. This lesson covered three aspects of love that can sometimes be very difficult: patience, truthfulness, and forgiveness. Which part of the lesson was most meaningful to you? Why?
2. Where does impatience show up in your life?
3. What is the difference between judging people and
4. How do you respond when someone hurts you? Why is it so hard to forgive people who hurt us? What are the consequences of choosing not to forgive?

SERVE Together

10 Minutes

1. In what ways do patience, truthfulness, and forgiveness impact your ability to serve in ministry?
2. Is there someone in your church or Connect Group with whom you need to seek reconciliation? Why wait any longer? Reach out to that person this week with truthfulness and forgiveness. We will pray together about these relationships during the Worship Together section of this study.

SHARE Together

10 Minutes

1. How can unforgiveness or resentment in your relationship with someone who is not a follower of Christ affect their openness to Jesus Christ? What difference could a healed relationship make in that person's life?
2. How do unity and love in your church affect your church's testimony to your community?

WORSHIP Together

10 Minutes

1. As Pastor Rick closed his message, he asked: "Do you need to be patient with someone? Do you need to speak the truth in love to someone? Do you need to forgive someone?" Take a moment to quietly reflect on these questions. Write down a name or a situation that comes to mind.

Name or Situation: _____

2. Break into subgroups of three or four people, or pair up with your spiritual partner. Tell each other if you have a relationship that needs healing, either through patience, truthfulness or forgiveness. This is not a time to share details or assign blame. Simply mention the person's name or the nature of the relationship (e.g. brother, colleague, mother, neighbor, friend, etc.). Share as openly as you feel comfortable so the group can pray more specifically for you.

Then, as an act of worship and because it will please the Father, pray for each other, asking God to soften your hearts and give you courage and grace to initiate the healing process. If you are not yet ready to reconcile, then pray that God will help you to become “willing to be ready.”

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Recruit a volunteer to be your Group Ministry Project Coordinator! His or her job will be to contact your church this week and ask for some practical suggestions as to how your Connect Group can serve your church. You will need this information for next week’s Connect Group meeting.

BIG IDEA: We all need models to help us mature, and we all need to be a model for someone else to mature.

S — Scripture - 1 Corinthians 4:16-17 (NLT)

“So I urge you to imitate me. That’s why I have sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of how I follow Christ Jesus, just as I teach in all the churches wherever I go.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Answer these questions - Who will I look to as models and mentors for my spiritual growth? Who am I willing to be an example to?

BIG IDEA: We have the power to kill or give life.

S — Scripture - Romans 15:2 (GW)

"We should all be concerned about our neighbor and the good things that will build his faith."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Consider how you can become a more consistent source of encouragement to those around you.

BIG IDEA: We are all teachers of faith in Christ.

S — Scripture - Colossians 3:16 (NLT)

“Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Share some lessons God has taught you recently with your Connect Group.

BIG IDEA: Let others go first.

S — Scripture - Philippians 2:3 (NJB)

“Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Evaluate what ways and situations you need to “practice playing second fiddle” this week.

BIG IDEA: The purpose of confession is not disgrace but grace.

S — Scripture - James 5:16 (NIV)

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Consider what areas of your life need to be confessed. What are you going to do about it?

BIG IDEA: Fellowship without forgiveness is impossible.

S — Scripture - Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: If there's someone you need to forgive, consider forgiving them. If there is someone you've wronged, consider going to ask them for forgiveness.

Serving Together

CONNECT Together _____ 10 Minutes

1. Check the progress of your group outreach project.
2. Last week we talked and prayed about being patient with others, speaking the truth in love, and forgiveness. How did that lesson impact your life this week? Did you see any answers to your prayer?
3. This week we are going to talk about serving the Lord by serving people in your church family. What do you think are the characteristics of a true servant?

GROW Together _____ 35 Minutes

MEMORY VERSE: *“By helping each other with your troubles, you truly obey the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2 (NCV)*



VIDEO LESSON: Watch now and follow along in outline.

SERVING TOGETHER

Four Key Aspects of Serving Together Groups:

1. Make themselves _____ to serve.
2. Work as a _____.

“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 4:16 (NIV)

3. Think more about _____ than themselves.

*“Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.”
Philippians 2:4 (MSG)*

*“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.”
Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NLT)*

“...consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” Hebrews 10:24 (NIV)

4. Do every task with equal _____.

“If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.” Mark 9:35 (NIV)

*“If any of you wants to serve me, then follow me. Then you’ll be where I am, ready to serve at a moment’s notice. The Father will honor and reward anyone who serves me.”
John 12:26 (MSS)*

*“He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by **caring for other Christians.**” Hebrews 6:10 (NLT)*



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are you currently serving in a ministry at church? If you are, tell the group about it.
2. Where do you find the most joy when it comes to helping others?
3. The true test of a servant-heart is in how you react when you are treated like a servant. Have you ever been treated like a servant? How did it make you feel?

4. Consider these roadblocks to ministry: time constraints, over-commitment, lack of interest, lack of confidence, lack of information. Which of these roadblocks presents the biggest obstacle for you? What can you do to avoid or overcome these barriers to ministry?

HOST TIP: There will be no Share Together questions this week. We want you to focus the rest of your time on the Serve Together section of your study.

SERVE Together

20 Minutes

What can you do together as a Connect Group to serve your church?

1. **Determine a need:** What will your group do? Pastor Rick said, "There is nothing too small, too mundane, or too menial for a true servant." Make a list of practical needs your group can meet in the church. Here are a few examples to get you started:

- Serve once a month as a group in our Guest Service ministry.
- Serve CP Kids once a month as a CG.
- Serve once a month in the parking lot greeting people as they arrive and leave church.
- Take on a maintenance project at church such as painting or re-carpeting an office or classroom.
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Now pray together and ask the Lord what he would have you do. After you have prayed, choose the need your group will meet.

highest purposes for our lives. We pray these things in the name of Jesus, and for the glory of your kingdom. Amen. “

3. Break into subgroups and pray for one another's prayer requests.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

1. Start making plans for an evening meal or a picnic with your group to celebrate what God has done in your lives through these few weeks of Community. A party is an excellent opportunity for you to invite people who might be interested in joining your group. Talk about your celebration before you leave your meeting. Where will you have your party? When will you have it? Will it be a potluck, will someone barbeque, or will you call out for pizza? Divide up the responsibilities and then get ready to enjoy a great time of fellowship together. You deserve it!
2. There is just one week left in our Better Together series. Take a few minutes for an informal evaluation of your Connect Group experience. What has been helpful to you? What has challenged you? What would make this a better experience? How do you feel about continuing on as a group? Talk about these and address any concerns that might be raised.

BIG IDEA: We're saved to serve each other.

S — Scripture - Galatians 5:13 (NIV)

"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Identify how you will serve someone in your church or Connect Group today.

We're Called To Serve Together

By Helping Each Other

WEEK 5
DAY 31

BIG IDEA: We're called to carry each other's burdens.

S — Scripture - Galatians 6:2 (CEV)

"You obey the law of Christ when you offer each other a helping hand."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Identify who you know that needs your help to carry their burden today.

BIG IDEA: You have more to share than you realize.

S — Scripture - Acts 2:44 (LB)

“All the believers met together constantly and shared everything with each other.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Evaluate how attached you are to your possessions. Do you own them or do they own you?

BIG IDEA: Humility is the result of knowing who God created you to be.

S — Scripture - 1 Peter 5:5 (NLT)

“All of you, serve each other in humility, for God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Evaluate how you would feel if you were treated like a servant.

BIG IDEA: Serious service requires serious sacrifice.

S — Scripture - 1 John 3:16 (GW)

“We understand what love is when we realize that Christ gave his life for us. That means we must give our lives for other believers.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Identify what sacrifice you can make that will enrich the lives of many.

We're Called To Serve Together

By Partnering With Each Other

WEEK 5
DAY 35

BIG IDEA: We are better together.

S — Scripture - 1 Corinthians 3:9 (NLT)

"We work together as partners who belong to God."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Evaluate how your gifts and abilities complement the others in your group.

CONNECT Together

10 Minutes

1. Check in about the progress of your group's ministry plans that you discussed last week.
2. How would your friends rate you on the generosity meter?
Scrooge ←-----→ Mother Teresa

GROW Together

35 Minutes

MEMORY VERSE: *"You have six days to do your work, but the seventh day of each week is holy because it belongs to me."*
Leviticus 23:3 (CEV)



VIDEO LESSON: Watch now and follow along in outline.

WORSHIPING TOGETHER

Six Practical Reasons for Giving

1. Giving makes me more like _____.
"God so loved the world that he gave..." John 3:16a (NIV)
2. Giving draws me _____ to God.
"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
Matthew 6:21 (NIV)
3. Giving is the antidote to _____.

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them... to be generous and willing to share. In this way... they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NIV)

4. Giving strengthens my _____.

“Bring the whole tithe to the storehouse... Test me in this, ‘says the Lord Almighty,’ and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it!” Malachi 3:10 (NIV)

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding... Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce.” Proverbs 3:5,9 (NLT)

5. Giving is an investment for _____
—.

“Give happily to those in need, always being ready to share... whatever God has given you. By doing this, you will be storing up real treasure for yourself in heaven—it is the only safe investment for eternity.” 1 Timothy 6:18-10 (LB)

6. Giving blesses me in _____.

“A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.” Proverbs 11:25 (NIV)

“There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.” Acts 20:35b (NJB)

Four Attitudes for Giving

1. Give **willingly**.

“For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has not according to what he does not have.” 2 Corinthians 8:12 (NIV)

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion.”

2 Corinthians 9:7 (NIV)

2. Give **thankfully**.

“How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?”
Psalm 116:12 (NIV)

“Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what come from your hand.” 1 Chronicles 29:14b (NIV)

3. Give **joyfully**.

“God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7b (NIV)

4. Give **expectantly**.

“Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” 2 Corinthians 9:6 (NIV)

“Just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see what you also excel in this grace of giving.”
2 Corinthians 8:7 (NIV)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Take a few minutes to share what your relationships in this group have meant to you.
2. What are some practical ways you can demonstrate your gratitude to God?
3. Jesus said it is better to give than receive. Share about a time you found this to be true in your own life. How did giving make you feel?
4. Why do you think generosity is so important to God?

SERVE Together

10 Minutes

1. In this session we've talked about giving financially. But another way for us to give is through the use of our time. What can you do to continue serving your church together as a group?
2. One person in your group who has seen a need and seized the opportunity to meet it is your Connect Group leader. His or her leadership in your group has provided an example of using one's gifts to serve others. Take a few minutes to affirm your host. Focus on the character qualities, gifts, and talents he or she brings to your group. Thank your leader for all of his or her hard work.

SHARE Together

10 Minutes

1. We want to encourage you to continue to develop the purpose of evangelism in your Connect Group life. We pray your project will be the starting point of a lifestyle of service for your group and for you as an individual. Our hope is that you will look back after these 6 weeks and not say, "Look what we did," but rather say, "Look what we started!" What can your group do to continue reaching out to your community with the love of Jesus Christ?
2. Our pastors would love to hear about your Connect Group's ministry and outreach projects. Please email your stories to ryan.martinez@christplace.church. Thanks!

WORSHIP Together

10 Minutes

1. What has been the most important lesson you have learned through this Better Together study? Have each member of the group share something that has been meaningful to him or her. Then offer prayers of thanks together for what God has done in your lives.
2. Close your time together by praying for each other's prayer requests. Recognize and celebrate any answered prayers from previous weeks. Record your prayer requests on the Connect Group Prayer and Praise Report in the back of your guide.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

We encourage you to have a party or picnic together – a time to focus on fellowship and celebrate what God has done throughout the last several weeks. This gathering is also a good opportunity to bring friends who might want to join your Connect Group. It gives potential group members a non-threatening environment in which to get acquainted with the rest of you. Talk about this with your group: Set a date, time, and location, and decide what kind of food you will have.

We're Created To Worship Together

By Worshiping Enthusiastically

WEEK 6
DAY 37

BIG IDEA: Focus on the goodness of God, not the troubles of your circumstance.

S — Scripture - Philippians 4:8 (NLT)

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Consider organizing an opportunity for your Connect Group to spend time in worship together.

BIG IDEA: When we worship with a proud heart, we sin.

S — Scripture - 2 Chronicles 12:14 (NKJV)

"[Rehoboam] did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Identify what you can do to prepare yourself for corporate worship this weekend.

BIG IDEA: As your group prays together, your faith will be strengthened, and you'll see God's power unleashed.

S — Scripture - Acts 1:14 (NLT)

"They all met together and were constantly united in prayer."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Evaluate how high of a priority prayer is in the life of your Connect Group.

BIG IDEA: Every time I celebrate God with others, I'm practicing for heaven.

S — Scripture - Ephesians 5:19 (CEV)

"When you meet together, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, as you praise the Lord with all your heart."

O — Observation

A — Application

P — Prayer

NEXT STEPS: Answer this question for yourself - When you worship, are you more concerned about what others think or what God thinks?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CALENDAR

Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. It might take some time for this to develop. Shared ownership ensures that responsibility for the group doesn't fall to one person. Use the calendar to keep track of social events, mission projects, birthdays, or days off. Complete this calendar at your first or second meeting. Planning ahead will increase attendance and shared ownership.

DATE	LESSON	LOCATION	SNACK OR MEAL
	Session 1		
	Session 2		
	Session 3		
	Session 4		
	Session 5		.
	Session 6		.

CONNECT GROUP GUIDELINES

We agree to the following values:

CLEAR PUROSE: To grow healthy spiritual lives by building a healthy group community.

GROUP ATTENDENCE: Give priority to the group meeting. (Call if I am absent or late.)

SAFE ENVIROMENT: To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (No quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

BE CONFIDENTIAL: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: To avoid gossip and to immediately resolve and concerns by following the Principles of Matthew 18: 15-17.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH: To give group members permission to speak into my life and help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God.

LIMIT OUR FREEDOM: To limit our freedom by not serving or consuming alcohol during connect group meetings or event so as to avoid causing a weaker brother or sister to stumble. (1Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 14: 19-21)

WELCOME NEWCOMERS: To invite friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS: To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly.

WE HAVE ALSO DISCUSSED AND AGREE ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- Childcare _____
- Starting Time _____
- Ending Time _____

If you haven't already done so, take a few minutes to fill out the Connect Group Calendar.

CIRCLES OF LIFE

Connect Group Connection

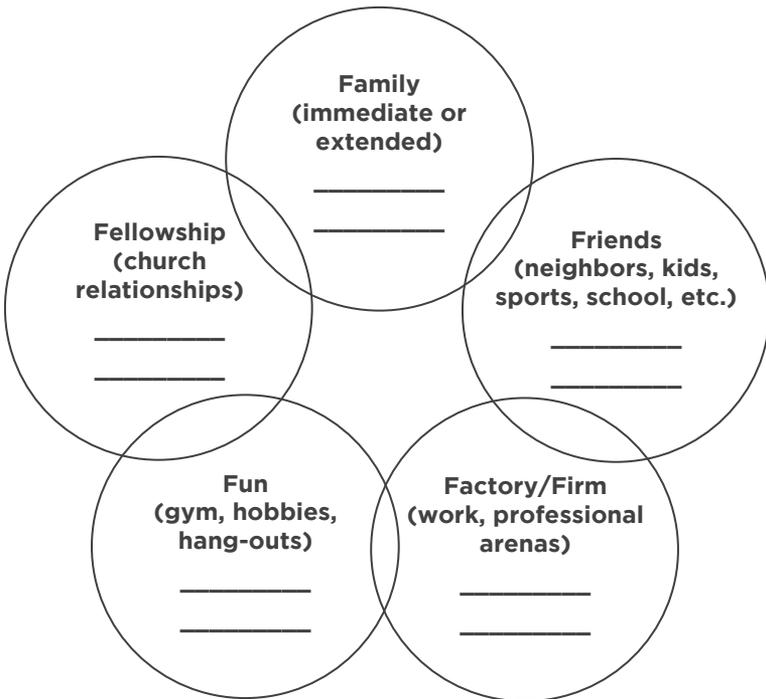
DISCOVER WHO YOU CAN CONNECT IN COMMUNITY

Use this chart to help carry out one of the values in the Group Guidelines to “Welcome Newcomers.”

“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” Matthew 4:19

Follow this simple three-step process:

1. List 1-2 people in each circle.
2. Prayerfully select one person or couple from your list and tell your group about them.
3. Give them a call and invite them to your next meeting. Over fifty percent of those invited to a small group say, “Yes!”



ANSWER KEY

SESSION ONE: What matters most

1. Nothing I **say** will matter.
2. Nothing I **know** will matter.
3. Nothing I **believe** will matter.
4. Nothing I **give** will matter.
5. Nothing I **accomplish** will matter.

What is Love?

- Love is a **command**.
- Love is a **choice**.
- Love is a **conduct**.
- Love is a **commitment**.

SESSION TWO: Reaching out together

- Recognize the **need**.
- Take **inventory**.
- Get **organized**.
- Be **available**.

SESSION THREE: Belonging together

1. Love always **protects**.
Protects = **by covering to keep off a threat, hold out against**.
2. Love always **trusts**.
We believe **IN** each other.
We believe **FOR** each other.
3. Love always **hopes**.
Be **enthusiastic** about other people's accomplishments.
4. Love always **perseveres**.

SESSION FOUR: Growing together

1. Growing together requires **patience**.
2. Growing together requires **truthfulness**.

Speak the Truth in Love

- A. Check your **motives**.
 - B. Plan your **conversation**.
 - 1) Plan **when** you'll say it.
 - 2) Plan **what** you'll say.
 - 3) Plan **how** you'll say it.
 - C. **Pray**.
 - Say it tactfully.
 - Say it lovingly.
 - Say it gently.
3. Growing together requires **forgiveness**.

SESSION FIVE: Serving together

1. Make themselves **available** to serve.
2. Work as a **team**.
3. Think more about **others** than themselves.
4. Do every task with equal **dedication**.

SESSION SIX: Worshiping together

1. Giving makes me more like **God**.
2. Giving draws me **closer** to God.
3. Giving is the antidote to **materialism**.
4. Giving strengthens my **faith**.
5. Giving is an investment for **eternity**.
6. Giving blesses me in **return**.

Four Attitudes for Giving

1. Give **willingly**.
2. Give **thankfully**.
3. Give **joyfully**.
4. Give **expectantly**.

FALL 2019
Connect Group Study



Better Together

God didn't intend for us to live alone. He specifically designed us to crave—and thrive in—relationship with others.

Life is better together.