

# COMMUNITY GROUP EXPERIENCE

Fall 2025

## Overview

In our technology-driven, hyper-connected world, genuine human connection feels more elusive than ever. Though we are told that connecting with others is as simple as a swipe on your phone, the truth is that we have never felt more alone and isolated. Social scientists, health professionals, and others who study human flourishing are alarmed with the nature of our relationships today. Across the board we are discovering that our relational depravity is leading to very bad outcomes for our families, churches, and other cultural institutions.

New research in psychology and social science is exposing many barriers in our attitudes that must be overcome to connect. A recent secular book, *Our New Social Life: Science-Backed Strategies for Creating Meaningful Connection* by Natalie Kerr and Jamie Kurtz, evaluates the enormous amount of recent scientific data on this problem. They identify several current trends that serve as barriers to genuine human connection, and these are important challenges that the church must recognize as we seek to reach people for Christ. In our 4-week Community Group Experience we are going to discuss 4 of these cultural attitudes and look to God's Word to help us evaluate and consider their implications.

### Week #1

#### Cultural Attitude #1: We treat social connection as a luxury instead of a necessity.

Text: Genesis 2:18-22 "It's not good for man to be alone...."

This is not just about marriage....the biblical truth is that we were created for deep connection with others. Isolation and loneliness is so destructive because it hits at one of our deepest needs.

### Week #2

#### Cultural Attitude #2: We overlook simple ways to connect and underestimate how much others value those efforts.

Text: Hebrews 13:1-3 "Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers..."

If we don't invite others into our lives, the household of faith quickly devolves into a series of detached meetings in a building without meaningful connection.

### Week #3

#### Cultural Attitude #3: We fear vulnerability and hold back from deeper relationships.

Text: 2 Corinthians 6:1-13 "...widen your hearts also"

The passage emphasizes the importance of open communication, genuine love, and a willingness for deeper and more profound relationships with one another.

### Week #4

#### Cultural Attitude #4: We wait for connection to happen instead of creating it.

Text: Luke 19:1-10 "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Week #1: We treat social connection as a luxury instead of a necessity.

**Warmup:** On a scale from 1-10 (1 being the lowest), how would you rate your level of sincere connection to people outside your immediate family? Why would you rate it that way?

**Summary:** The bible makes it clear from the beginning that social connection is not a luxury. Simply put, we were created for relationship with others. But many today see broader social connection as something extra, something nice to have when everything else in life is operating well. With this thinking, it should not surprise us that fewer people are finding the time to expand their relational network. Each person's social needs look a little different, but making time for genuine relationships is a biblical priority that none of us have the luxury of disregarding. Our mental, physical, and spiritual health are directly tied to the quality of relationships we cultivate in this life. On top of that, our call as followers of Jesus is to impact the world around us. This is impossible without making relationships a priority.

**Passage:** *Genesis 2:18-22*

**Head Questions:** Why do you think God said, "it is not good that the man should be alone"?  
Do you think God intended for marriage to be the full and complete answer to man's need for connection? Why or why not?

**Heart Questions:** Have you, intentionally or not, ever treated relationships as a luxury instead of a necessity? If so, how?  
What are some of the key barriers in your life that make connecting with others challenging?

**Hands Questions:** What practical step or steps could you take to prioritize building new or more meaningful relationships with the people around you?  
In your life right now, where is there more fertile ground to reach out and connect with other people? (Work, school, church, neighborhood, other)

**Closing Prayer:**

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

**Week #2: We overlook simple ways to connect and underestimate how much others value those efforts.**

**Warmup:** Do you consider yourself an introvert or extrovert? How does that affect the way you meet new people and build relationships?

**Summary:** Current research tells us that we make social connection much more complicated in our minds than it needs to be. We often value personal gifts like wit, humor, and good conversation, but we can overvalue these traits in making social connections. Connection is often built on things that are much simpler like frequency of interaction and shared experiences. Those who take the small opportunities to connect when they are presented are those who build stronger relationships over time. The bible speaks to our responsibility to become hospitable. That may sound overwhelming, but being hospitable begins when we learn to spot simple moments to connect and welcome others into our lives.

**Passage:** *Hebrews 13:1-3*

**Head Questions:**

- Why is it important to God that His people show hospitality to strangers?
- What do you think it means that "some have entertained angels"?
- Some are convinced that building relationships with strangers in our culture is harder than ever. Do you believe that is true? Why or why not?

**Heart Questions:**

- Have you experienced hospitality from others that had a big impact in your life? When and how?
- What has it looked like for you to practice hospitality? Give some examples.
- What stops you from inviting others into your life more frequently?

**Hands Questions:**

- What are some simple first steps of hospitality with people we don't know and would not yet invite into our homes?
- What advantage does a small group of people have when it comes to practicing hospitality over a one person, couple, or family?

**Closing Prayer:**

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

**Week #3: We fear vulnerability and hold back from deeper relationships.**

**Warmup:** What type of person do you allow to really get to know you? Be descriptive.

**Summary:** The relationship between Paul, his co-laborers in ministry, and the Corinthian Christians was complicated, to say the least. Though they all loved one another and shared great blessing in their relationships, they also experienced great frustration and even heartache. In 2nd Corinthians we see the range of these experiences and emotions spilling out. Paul begs them not to receive the gospel in vain, to keep their ministry together honorable and pleasing to God, and most of all to continue building up their connection together as God's people. His closing in vs. 11-13 is a moving appeal to deeper relationship. He tells them that he has been open and vulnerable with them and that he desires for them to do the same. God calls us to deeper, more meaningful relationships and that is not possible without being vulnerable.

**Passage:** *2 Corinthians 6:1-13*

**Head Questions:**

- How would you describe the emotional weight of Paul's words here?
- What does Paul mean when he calls them to widen their hearts?
- Why is it so difficult to experience deeper relationships in the church?

**Heart Questions:**

- What does a "deeper" relationship with others really look like to you?
- How have past hurts limited your willingness to be vulnerable with others?
- Where do you see God opening opportunities for deeper relationships?

**Hands Questions:**

- What does it really take for a small group of believers to grow deeper together?
- If that group begins to experience deeper relationships, how can that affect people outside of the group?

**Closing Prayer:**

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Week #4: We wait for connection to happen instead of creating it.

**Warmup:** What are some of the most opportune places and times in your weekly schedule that put you in a position to meet and talk to people?

**Summary:** We can get into the habit of thinking that improving our social lives and connecting to others depends on external factors like moving to a new city, meeting the right kind of people, or waiting for my certain circumstances to change. We end up giving fate a lot more power and authority in our lives than we should. Connecting with others happens to be more of a rhythm of our daily habits and practices than it is the hand of random encounters. If we change our mindset and consider how we can become more proactive in our habits we will find that connecting with others becomes more possible.

**Passage:** *Luke 19:1-10*

**Head Questions:** As a public figure, Jesus had opportunity to meet many different people. Why choose someone like Zaccheaus to spend time with?  
Why do you think Jesus took initiative to go to Zaccheaus' house?  
What does it really take in our culture to start a friendship with someone?

**Heart Questions:** On a scale from 1-10 (1 being the least), how proactive are you in starting and building relationships with others? Explain your number.  
What would it require for you to become more proactive?  
Is there an underlying fear behind your hesitancy in approaching others?

**Hands Questions:** What can a group of believers do together to create connection with outsiders?  
Is there someone in your life right now that you think needs encouragement to connect? If you are comfortable sharing, who is it?

**Closing Prayer:**