



# CONNECT

## WEEK 3: LOCK ARMS

*Church — The Presence of God*

### Monday: Why We Gather

*Scripture: Hebrews 10:24-25*

*[24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (ESV)*

You don't "have" church like you have a gym membership or a favorite coffee shop. You are the church.

Church isn't about being entertained or enlightened by a gifted preacher or a talented worship team. It's much less about the people on the stage and more about the people sitting beside you. It's about being part of a community that loves Jesus and loves you enough to encourage you, challenge you, and walk with you through the good, the hard, and the messy.

That's why God tells us not to give up meeting together. We need people who remind us what's true when the world is loud, who hold us up when our knees are weak, who call out the good in us and call us back when we start to drift.

And yes—sometimes that happens over potluck casseroles, parking lot conversations, or coffee in the church lobby. But at the heart of it is encouragement and accountability—knowing we're better together than we could ever be alone.

### REFLECTION

- Who is helping you grow in your faith right now—and how are you intentionally helping them grow too?



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### Tuesday: Every Part Matters

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

*[12] For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. [13] For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. [14] For the body does not consist of one member but of many. [15] If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. [16] And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. [17] If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? [18] But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. [19] If all were a single member, where would the body be? [20] As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. [21] The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” [22] On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, [23] and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, [24] which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, [25] that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. [26] If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together [27] Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

**One body. Many parts. And yes—even the weird parts matter. (Looking at you, pinky toe.)**

The beauty of the Church is that God designed us for interdependence. Each person plays a role that no one else can fill—some roles are front and center, others are more behind the scenes, but all are vital. In a body without its lungs, or its hands, or yes, even its toes, things stop working the way they were meant to. It's harder on the rest of the body as it has to overcompensate for the part that didn't show up to do its job. That's what we don't want to see happen here. Burnt out ministry leaders, tired volunteers who have to keep stepping up in the absence of others, children who learn that serving and contributing is a burden and not a gift because mom and dad avoid it or complain about it. That's not how it should be.

Please hear us. Your part matters! Even if it feels small, small doesn't mean insignificant. In fact, some of the most important parts of the body are the ones nobody sees. If you're serving, you're a gift to your church, a vital gift.

So if you haven't stepped up, this is your invitation. And if you have but you don't love where God has you, instead of comparing or wishing you had a different role, ask Him where He wants you and to either help you love what you are or move you to where you should be.

The body is better—and healthier—because you're in it. The church thrives when you are contributing.

### REFLECTION

- How are you actively pursuing/chasing God this week?



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### Wednesday: The Ministry of Presence

*Scripture: Romans 12:15*

*[15] Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. (ESV)*

You don't have to fix it—you just have to be there.

Being part of a church family means showing up for each other in both the good times and the hard times. Sometimes that's celebrating answered prayers and big life moments, and sometimes it's just sitting with someone who's hurting.

When we rejoice together, joy multiplies. When we mourn together, burdens get lighter. In God's family, we're called to match each other's emotional pace—running alongside in the joy and slowing down to walk through the pain. Carrying one another's burdens is a gift and a privilege. Being a part of the church should mean that no one is ever alone in the highs and lows of life.

This is true hospitality. It's not the coffee and snacks (though we love those!)—it's about caring for each other. And here's the thing: you don't need the perfect house, the right words, or a wide open calendar to do this. What people really need is for you to just be available. To listen, to pray, to laugh, or sometimes to sit in silence. Presence says, "You matter. You're not alone."

### REFLECTION

- Who can you be present with this week?



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### Thursday: Burdens, Not Baggage

*Scripture: Galatians 6:2*

*[2] Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (ESV)*

Real community doesn't just show up for the wins—it also shows up for the losses.

It's easy to celebrate when someone gets the job, the house, or the answer to prayer. It's harder to step into the grief, disappointment, or heartbreak that life can bring. But Jesus calls us to both.

The problem is that sometimes we try to do more than we were meant to do.

Helping carry someone's burden is not the same thing as taking on all of their baggage.

God calls us to walk alongside each other, lending our strength when the load gets too heavy, pointing each other back to Jesus when we forget the way. But He doesn't call us to drag their burden until we collapse under the weight—or to take responsibility for things only He can fix.

Love means being present, not attempting to be the savior. That role's already taken.

So check your heart: are you helping someone move forward, or have you unknowingly picked up a weight that isn't yours to carry?

### REFLECTION

- Are you carrying someone's burden—or dragging it?



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### Friday: The Glue of Forgiveness

*Scripture: Colossians 3:13–14*

*[13] bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. [14] And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (ESV)*

**“Bear with each other and forgive one another... And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”**

**Forgiveness is the glue that holds community together. Without it, relationships crack and splinter under the pressure of offense and unmet expectations.**

**Spoiler alert: people will annoy you. They’ll disappoint you. They’ll get it wrong—sometimes without even realizing it. And yes, you’ll do the same to them.**

**The choice is to hold on to the offense—or to let God’s love and the work of the Holy Spirit in your life lead you to forgiveness. Forgiveness doesn’t mean pretending it didn’t hurt. It means you’re releasing your right to get even or obsess over it, and trusting God to heal what’s broken. Forgiveness lets you move forward toward becoming more like Jesus. But in the absence of forgiveness, bitterness takes root and can harden your heart faster than anything.**

**Love is what binds us together, but forgiveness is what keeps us from falling apart.**

### REFLECTION

- Is there someone in your life you need to forgive?



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