

CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

Table of Contents

Note from Pastor Kermit:	1
Lesson 1: Reality Check (Titus 3:3-11).....	2
Lesson 2: Open Arms (James 2:1-10)	4
Lesson 3: Gracious Hospitality (1 Peter 4:7-11)	6
Lesson 4: Intentional Love (Luke 10:25-37).....	8
Lesson 5: Authentic Joy (1 Thessalonians 1:1-10)	10
Lesson 6: Going Out (Acts 16:6-15).....	12

Note from Pastor Kermit:

This study “**Connecting and Engaging People in the Church**” will take us through six different books in the New Testament, highlighting hospitality, witnessing, welcoming others into the church and sharing the love of Christ. It is my prayer that this series will ignite the great commission in our hearts and in turn leading others to faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- ❖ Be engaged
 - Take notes, participate, commit to memorizing the verse of the week
- ❖ Be prayerful
 - Pray that God will open up our understanding to His Word
- ❖ Invite a friend



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CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

Lesson 1: Reality Check (Titus 3:3-11)

What makes a house feel like home?

Our lives should serve as a welcome mat into the church.

Titus 3:1-7

1 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,
2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.
3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.
4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,
5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,
6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,
7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Discussion Question #1

How have you personally experienced the kindness and love of God?

Points to Ponder

- The gospel keeps us from looking down on others.
- The gospel reminds us of what is possible.
- The gospel points us to the future.

Titus 3:8

8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

Discussion Question #2

What are some ways you've seen good works make a difference?



CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

Titus 3:9-11

9 But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.

10 Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition,

11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

Discussion Question #3-4

What steps can we take to redirect debates toward kingdom-focused conversations?

How can the truths of this lesson help our church become more welcoming?

Conclusion:

Our lives should be a welcome mat into the church. Our church may not be able to meet every person's expectations, but if the gospel transforms us, we can be a welcome mat rather than a stumbling block to others.

"Most church members have forgotten what it's like to be a first-time guest!"



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CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

Lesson 2: Open Arms (James 2:1-10)

When have you felt like the “new kid on the block”?

Welcoming others go beyond a friendly handshake.

James 2:1-4

- 1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.
- 2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes,
- 3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool,"
- 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Discussion Question #1

What are some ways we may be tempted to show favoritism today?

Points to Ponder:

- Partiality neglects the image of God in fellow humans.
- Partiality sees others as objects to be used.
- Partiality sets us up as a judge.

James 2:5-7

- 5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?
- 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?
- 7 Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

Discussion Question #2

How do these verses reveal God’s character?



CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

James 2:8-10

8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;

9 but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

Discussion Question #3-4

What is the connection between our relationship with God and our relationship with others?

How can the truths of this lesson help our church become more welcoming?

Conclusion:

We must break out of the huddles of familiarity we have created for ourselves and reach out to any and all God brings our way. It's always easier to surround ourselves with people who are familiar, but we must remember that God loves everyone the same, so we must learn to embrace all with open arms.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind" and "your neighbor as yourself"

Luke 10:27



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CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

Lesson 3: Gracious Hospitality (1 Peter 4:7-11)

What's the most interesting place you've stayed on a trip?

Ground your service and love in hospitality.

1 Peter 4:7

7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

Discussion Question #1

When has your perspective of others been changed because of prayer?

Practical prayers:

- Pray that God would help us see ourselves as stewards.
- Pray that God would help us confront our greed.
- Pray that God would bring us opportunities to share hospitality.

1 Peter 4:8-9

8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

Discussion Question #2

How can our hospitality demonstrate the gospel to others?

1 Peter 4:10-11

10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Discussion Question #3-4

When has someone else's hospitality encouraged you in your walk with Christ?

How can the truths of this lesson help our church become more welcoming?



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CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

Conclusion:

Hospitality might be easier for some than others but we are all commanded to be hospitable.

Try to greet someone. Arrive at church a few minutes early this week. Spend extra time in fellowship, make sure to say hello and meet people you don't know.

Regardless of whether our natural personality is welcoming or not, we are compelled by how God has welcomed us to extend the same welcome to others.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:14-15 NKJV



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CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

Lesson 4: Intentional Love (Luke 10:25-37)

When has a wrong turn led to a pleasant surprise?

Go out of your way to love others.

Luke 10:25-28

25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

27 So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.' "

28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

Discussion Question #1-2

When has your love for God prompted you to love other people?

How can we love others unreservedly, sacrificially and proactively? Explain.

Luke 10:29-32

29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 "Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 "Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

Discussion Question #3

In what ways do we sometimes justify not helping others in need?

Luke 10:33-37

22 Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face."

23 Then the LORD said to him, "Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die."

24 So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is-Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.



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CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

Discussion Question #4-5

When has someone taken risks or made sacrifices to demonstrate God's love to you?

How can this passage of scripture help our church become more welcoming?

Conclusion:

We might accidentally stumble upon a situation that requires our help, but none of us are going to love and serve someone else accidentally. We only do this with intention. Let's gear our lives so that we are ready to intentionally take advantage of opportunities God brings our way to express His love to others.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."



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CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

Lesson 5: Authentic Joy (1 Thessalonians 1:1-10)

What's the best forgery, fake, or fraud you've seen or heard about?

Authentic joy flows from a relationship with Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-3

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers,

3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

Discussion Question #1

What do work, labor, and endurance have to do with faith, love and hope?

1 Thessalonians 1:4-6

4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.

5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

6 ¶ And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,

Discussion Question #2-3

What are some ways your life reflects the joy of the gospel?

How demonstrating joy in difficult circumstances makes a difference in the kingdom?

Authentic Joy:

- Does not wax and wane with circumstances.
- Is more solid and stable than the rising sun. (Psalms 18:2)
- Is not found in immediate gratification but by pushing past it.



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CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

1 Thessalonians 1:7-10

7 so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Discussion Question #4

How can the truths of 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 help our group be more welcoming?

Encourage Ourselves with the Truth Of:

- What we deserve.
- What we have.
- What paid for our Salvation.

Conclusion:

Happiness and a plastic smile can be manufactured easily enough, but time and circumstances will reveal the phoniness behind it. Authentic joy, on the other hand, will shine through, for it is rooted in what God has done for us in Christ.

"Joy is the serious business of heaven."

C.S. Lewis



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CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

Lesson 6: Going Out (Acts 16:6-15)

Where do you feel most safe?

Engaging others with the gospel means going where they are?

Acts 16:6-8

6 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

Discussion Question #1

Have you ever been thankful that God told you “no”?

Acts 16:9-10

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

What may hinder us from having this kind of passion for sharing the gospel, here is a few thoughts:

- Prosperity
- Busyness
- Faithlessness

Discussion Question #2

Who in our community might be saying “come over and help us”?

Know this:

- Jesus is coming back.
- There are opportunities all around us to share the gospel.
- We have the tendency to drift away from the mission.



CONNECTING AND ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Six week Bible study

Acts 16:11-15

11 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis,

12 and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.

13 And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.

14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

Discussion Question #3-4

How would you describe God's part and our part in leading others to Christ?

How can the truths of this lesson help our church become more welcoming?

Conclusion:

The church should not be a bunker. Instead, we must go where others are. To truly be a welcoming church, and to obey the commission of Jesus, we cannot sit around and wait for people to come into the church building. We must instead take the initiative and go to where the people are.

"to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

I Corinthians 9:22 NKJV



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