



Connect to God

Leader's Guide

Week 5

Topic: Connect to God: Knowing the One We Worship

PREWORK: Before Class: Read this entire leader's guide and watch the videos online. Notice the time for both the teaching video and testimony video and plan the use of your time accordingly to allow good discussion.

Study these teaching points covered in the teaching video

The Bible

God's general will for all people, in all places, at all times and in all circumstances, is revealed in the pages of Scripture. The more familiar we are with the Bible; the more God is able to guide us. As Solomon noted, there really is nothing new under the sun. Human nature hasn't changed since the beginning of Scripture, and our problems are not unique to our modern times. The Bible is a life guide written for you and addresses an incredibly wide berth of issues and behaviors and contains the key to staying in God's will as we navigate life.

But what about the unique questions we face in our particular circumstances? How does the Bible address those issues? Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that Scripture is unique from all other literature, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." And II Timothy 3:16 tells us, All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Because the Bible is alive and active, it speaks to us personally and prepares us for every good work God guides us to.

We know we should read the Bible, but often aren't sure where to start or how to do it. A great place to begin is the book of Romans and the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). If you recognize similarities in your circumstances and those of a Bible figure, read their story to learn how they responded and how God delivered them. Don't worry about where to start or following a particular reading plan, just pick a place and start reading regularly. Gradually your Bible reading can become a time of personal worship as you begin to study passages systematically and slowly, asking God how he wants you to apply what you're reading and learning to your life.

The Holy Spirit

In the Old Testament, we see God guiding his people in a variety of ways – a cloud, a pillar of fire, a burning bush, even a talking donkey! Today, God's people have the gift of the Holy Spirit, one of the three persons of God, living inside us and guiding us. But who is the Holy Spirit, and how, exactly, does the Holy Spirit guide us?

When Jesus had been crucified and resurrected and was ascending to heaven, he instructed his disciples to wait for the gift he was sending them – the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the person or part of God that lives inside us. God is the Father, Jesus is the son who, being fully God and fully human, paid our debt and reconciles us with the Father. The Holy Spirit is the facet of God that dwells within us when we accept Christ’s sacrifice and the eternal life it brings. Because he is within us and knows our thoughts, fears, and desires, the Holy Spirit can communicate our needs to God even when we can’t articulate or even identify them.

The Holy Spirit guides us through prayer. Prayer is more than talking to God, it is listening, and waiting for his response to us. His response may be a thought that enters our mind, or a conviction or impression of something we feel compelled to do. Romans 8:26 says, “The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”

The Holy Spirit guides us by giving us a strong desire to do the things God has planned for us. As we spend time with God and get to know his Son as we read the Bible and pray, we develop a desire or passion to help people in certain circumstances or contribute to solving a problem in our community that disturbs or angers us. Philippians 2:13 tells us, “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”

Godly Counsel

We see how daily habits of prayer and Bible study open channels for God to guide us as we face decisions. Sometimes we have a situation or decision that creates doubt or confusion about how God would have us act. In these situations, we can call on the counsel or advice of godly men and women in our lives. Living life in community with other Christians means we have an available source of godly input as we seek God’s guidance.

The book of Proverbs repeatedly instructs us to seek the advice of the wise. Proverbs 12:15 tells us, “the wise listen to advice.” Conversely, Proverbs 15:22 warns, “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.” Proverbs 20:18 puts it bluntly, “Plans are established by seeking advice.” So, whom should we consult when faced with a decision and needing advice? What we are seeking is wisdom, and Proverbs 9:10 tells us, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” so we are seeking direction from those who fear or respect the Lord. These are people whom we respect – godly Christians with wisdom and experience. When faced with big decisions, it may be helpful to seek advice from more than one respected Christian.

When looking for godly counsel, examine the fruit of a Christian’s life – their relationships, the decisions they make, and their priorities. Jesus says his disciples are known by their love – how someone treats others and speaks about others are indicators of a disciple’s love. Those who love well are certainly people we can go to for godly advice.

Scriptures to review:

Psalm 25:9, Psalm 32:8, John 10:3-4, Colossians 1:9, Ephesians 1:7, Ephesians 2:10, Romans 12:2, Jeremiah 29:11, Hebrews 4:12, Hebrews 1:1-2, II Timothy 3:16, Romans 8:26, Proverbs 12:15, 20:18, 15:22, 9:10.

Tough questions prep:

How do I know if something is from God or just a good idea I came up with?

If it aligns with the Bible, is met with approval by your family (or those who will be most impacted) and have discussed it with a Christian you respect then you can proceed with confidence. God is not vague or secretive, he wants you to use your personality and uniqueness to accomplish His Kingdom work.

How do I find scripture relevant to my situation?

Most Bibles include a concordance and index to help you find scripture related to a particular topic. There are also several online Bible websites (for example, BibleGateway.com) that provide a list of Bible references by topic.

How do I approach a Christian whose advice I'd like to solicit?

Mature Christians listen to and speak truth to those who ask – it's how they became mature Christians, and it is God's plan for living in community. Asking someone to meet for coffee to get their insight on a question or issue you're struggling with is always appropriate and usually eagerly accepted.

Class Time:**Introduce the content and video for this class (in your own words):**

Modern life is full of decisions, some small and others monumental. We want to please God and live the life He has planned for us, but how does He guide us as we navigate all of life's choices?

Guidance comes from our relationship with God. Psalm 25:9 says, "He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way." God's guidance comes from reading the Bible, which is alive and active; the Holy Spirit, God indwelling in us; and the advice of wise Christians.

Play the teaching video.**Discussion questions (pages 22 and 23):**

1. Jesus described the Holy Spirit as The Comforter. How is it comforting to know the Holy Spirit is interceding for you as you pray?

2. Do you find the Bible helpful for navigating daily life? Do you see how consistent Bible study keeps you in the center of God's will?
3. Whom would you go to for godly counsel? What makes this person a "godly Christian with wisdom and experience"?
4. God uses scripture, the Holy Spirit, and advice from Christians to guide us, and often this guidance appears in our circumstances. Have you ever prayed for guidance then seen evidence of God's answer in circumstances in your life?

Play the short personal testimony video. Discuss, if time remains: Ask them if they ever thought that God in the form of the Holy Spirit lives inside them? How does that make them feel? Ask if they feel guided by the Holy Spirit. How did the experiment show that you are transformed into the image of Christ by the Holy Spirit?

Closing / takeaways in your own words:

God hasn't left you wondering and hoping you're doing life right. He has given you part of himself, the Holy Spirit, to live in you and communicate with you. He's written you the Bible, a 66 book love letter to tell His story of redemption and love, and He's given you a community of Christians to advise you.

Invite them back next week to learn 'how to resist evil'.

Prayer:

Instead of including a lesson devoted to how to pray, class leaders will model how to pray each of the six weeks of Connect to God. Before you close in prayer, briefly explain the ACTS method of prayer (adoration/praise, confession, thanksgiving and supplication) and lead participants through this format.