



SUMMER SURVIVAL GUIDE- LESSON 4

Writer: Tim Levert
Project Supervisor: Nick Diliberto
Editors: Gabrielle Lewis and Angela Ivey

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Lesson 4



Series: How to grow in your relationship with God this summer no matter what you face.



Lesson 4: I - Intentionally Connect with the Church



Bible Connection:
Romans 12:4-5 (NLT)



Bottom Line:
You need the church, and the church needs you.

SUPPLIES

- None

OPENING GAME

IN-PERSON & ONLINE VERSION: WHAT'S UP, FAM!?!?

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say,

- Tonight, we're playing "What's Up, Fam!?!?"
- Everyone will pick a famous character, actor, cartoon character, etc., to be for the game. (Don't tell anyone who you choose!)
- Once you know who you want to be, tell me, and I'll write it down.
- Once everyone is done, I'll read out the list of the famous names, but I won't tell you who's who—you've got to figure that out ☺.
- When I read the names, you can't write them down, so pay EXTRA CLOSE ATTENTION.
- I'll read them slowly. [NOTE: you can read the list twice if you want. Totally up to you.]
- I'll choose someone to start, and that person will point to someone and say, "I think you are _____."
 - If the guesser is right, the person they figured out is now a part of their family, and the guesser gets to guess again.
 - If the guesser is wrong, the person they didn't figure out gets to be the guesser.
- Once your fake identity is guessed, you no longer get to be a guesser.
- If you're the guesser and you have a family, they can help you guess who someone else is.
 - You don't have to keep the family conversation private unless you want to. It might be a good strategy for others to hear what you're saying.
- If you guess someone correctly, and they have a family, their whole family becomes part of your family.
- The winner is EITHER:
 - The family with the most people when the time is up, or
 - The last person whose identity isn't guessed.

TEACH

What's up y'all?!

Welcome back to week 4 of our series called "Summer Survival Guide!"

We've spent the last few weeks unpacking an acronym about six THINGS you can do to make more space in your life for Jesus.

Does anyone remember what each letter represents?

[Give students a chance to share them. Help them out as needed. Don't feel bad if they don't remember...it's them, not you. 😊]

- T Time with God daily
- H Honest friendships
- I Intentionally connect with the church
- N Notice and serve others
- G Give to God
- S Share God stories

Great job!

The first week we talked about reorienting our heart and mind to Jesus.

Then we unpacked the first of the THINGS-time with God daily-and we said the best way to make space for Jesus is to give Him some uninterrupted time every day.

Last week we dove into the second of the six THINGS-the H-honest friendships, and we said honest friendships help you experience more of God's best for your life.

Tonight, we're moving on to the third of the six THINGS-the I-intentionally connect with the church.

Each week we've been reminded that Jesus wants us to live a "rich and satisfying life."

Those words are from John 10:10, a verse I challenged you to memorize, and I said you would get _____.

Did anyone take me up on the challenge?

[Encourage students to try; and be positive and upbeat if they take a shot.]

Good job. Keep working on it-it's a great verse to stick in your brain. The church is the place where people who have been following Christ for a long time connect with people who are new to following Christ, and they learn from each other.

Tonight, we want you to understand that you need the church, and the church needs you.

The church can be a confusing beast.

When I say "church," I mean a local gathering of people who follow Jesus and live the way He wants.

You might wonder:

- Why there are so many different kinds of churches, or
- Why some churches play music with pianos and organs, and other churches play music with drums and electric guitars, or
- Why some churches have priests who wear robes and wave incense, and other churches have pastors who wear shorts and wave the "hang loose" sign.

And that's just in the United States!

There are churches on every livable continent in almost every country and in almost every language on earth.

That might seem confusing, but it's actually beautiful!

God is so big, and His love is so consuming that all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds from all over the world realize that they want to be a part of this huge, amazing, outrageous, beautiful thing called the church.

The Bible has some letters in it written by a guy named Paul.

Paul had a crazy experience that led to him following Jesus.

His faith led him to go all over the known world, telling people about Jesus.

He would stay in an area for a while, explain to the people what it meant to follow Jesus, then help them organize themselves as a church.

Paul hoped the followers of Jesus in an area would continue meeting together after he left town.

Oftentimes, he would hear stories about these places and send them letters of encouragement or correction.

One of those letters was to the church in Rome, and we have that letter in the Bible in the book called "Romans."

Would someone please read Romans 12:4-5 out loud for the group?

[I LOVE having students read from the Bible. If it doesn't work for your group, feel free to read it yourself or have another adult read it.]

4 Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, 5 so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. Romans 12:4-5 (NLT)

When we say “yes” to Jesus and begin following Him, we are adopted into a family that includes one-third of the population of the planet.

If you ever feel like you’re alone, remind yourself of that.

As we talked about last week, it’s important to have a small group of friends that you can really “do life” with.

When we’re in honest friendships like that, we help each other and learn from each other.

In the same way, it’s also super helpful to have connections with other Christ-followers in our community for encouragement, support, and celebration.

A lot of teenagers struggle with this idea of connecting with the whole church, but the third of the six THINGS you can do to make space for God’s spirit to change your heart and mind is to intentionally connect with the larger church.

Let’s have some “mandatory fun time.”

Turn to someone around you and answer the question, “Why do you think so many teenagers check out of church? What can churches do to reconnect with these teenagers?”

[FOR ONLINE GROUPS: Let’s have some “mandatory fun time.” In the chat window, type in your answer to the question, “Why do you think so many teenagers check out of church? What can churches do to reconnect with these teenagers?”]

What Do Intentional Connections with the Church Look Like?

The rhythm of intentionally connecting with the church means:

- Being involved with the church body and understanding what that means for the benefit of your life.
- Having relationships with people in the church who are older than you and with people who are younger than you.

- Understanding that the church needs you and you need the church!

The Bible has four books called gospels that tell a lot of the story of Jesus' life: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Luke, the guy who wrote the gospel of Luke, also wrote a book called Acts.

The book of Acts talks about the work of the Holy Spirit of Jesus after Jesus ascended into heaven.

In the first part of Acts, we learn about the lives of Jesus' followers right after He returned to the Father.

Would someone please read Acts 2:44-47 out loud for the group?

[Again, if this doesn't work for your group, you (or another adult) read it.]

44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had.

45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.

46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity -

47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.

And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. Acts 2:44-47 (NLT)

The Birth of the Church

The church was "born" after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension—when He sent His Spirit to empower and encourage His followers to live and reveal His kingdom.

You can read Acts 1 and 2 for more details—it was a crazy cool time.

It was Pentecost, which is like a big street festival—lots of eating, drinking, and dancing with your friends and family.

God's Holy Spirit filled up Jesus' followers in a miraculous way.

Listen as I read Acts 2:12-13, and pay attention to two of the ways people reacted to this wildness:

12 They [the people at the Pentecost festival] stood there amazed and perplexed.

"What can this mean?" they asked each other.

13 But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, "They're just drunk, that's all!" Acts 2:12-13

Did you catch it?

There were two reactions:

- Mock - some people walked away laughing.
- Awe - some people were amazed by God, and many followed Him.

The church today is a group of followers of Jesus committed to learning and trusting in the way of God's kingdom rather than the customs of culture.

Sometimes people react by cynicism and mockery, making fun of the church by calling it old and out-of-date.

Others have embraced the uniqueness and beauty of the church, and they've found a place to belong and experience deep relationships with like-minded people.

Jesus' teachings and way of life were radically different than the culture in which He lived.

His values revealed a new reality that He invited us to enter in.

The church today carries on Jesus' countercultural values by living in constant response to God's message.

Think about these areas:

INDEPENDENCE

- Culture says, "I'm all I need."
- God says, "Without Christ, you're an orphan."
- The church says, "Let's gather together as family."

LEADERSHIP

- Culture says, "I plan my life."
- God says, "I want to give you direction."
- The church says, "Let's seek God's direction together."

POWER

- Culture says, "I'm in control."
- God says, "I am in control."
- The church says, "Let's learn to trust God together."

RELATIONSHIPS

- Culture says, "I can use people."
- God says, "I invite people into a loving relationship with me and other followers of Jesus."
- The church says, "Let's learn how to serve one another."

The church is a unique place.

The church family is the best place for you to learn who you are.

It's the place to learn how to live and reveal the kingdom of God.

It's a place where people who have been following Christ for a long time connect with people who are new to following Christ, and they learn from each other.

You need the church, and the church needs you.

What Do I Do Now?

If you're ready to connect with the church intentionally, here are a few things we encourage you to do:

FIRST, be connected—commit to God's plan for the church.

We can all find plenty of good reasons why we don't want to get connected to others.

Instead of arguing with you, we're just going to say there are plenty of better reasons why you should get connected!

SECOND, step up.

Refuse to confuse attending church with following Jesus.

You're not a good student if you spend a lot of time in school but never learn anything.

Unless you're spending time listening, thinking, studying, reading, and discussing, you're not really a student—you're a piece of furniture!

In the same way, just attending gatherings with your church doesn't do you much good unless you're spending time listening, thinking, studying, reading, and discussing how to grow in your trust in and willingness to follow Jesus.

THIRD, plug-in.

Find your role in the larger church family.

It probably won't surprise you when we say you need the church.

It may surprise you when we say the church needs you, too.

You have things to learn, and you have things to teach.

There are areas for you to serve, and there are areas for you to lead.

God created you in His image, and He's shaped you to live a life that reveals His kingdom.

The church is the place where people who have been following Christ for a long time connect with people who are new to following Christ, and they learn from each other.

If you want to be the kind of person that grows in their relationship with Jesus and makes a great impact on other people, choose to intentionally connect with the church NOW!

You need the church, and the church needs you.

Remember, the decisions you make today shape who you will be tomorrow.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What belongings do you have that you like sharing with others? Which of your belongings would you not want to share with anyone else?
2. Why do so many teenagers struggle to spend time with adults?
3. The early church focused on spending time with one another. Is that how you would describe our youth group? Is that how you would describe our larger church family? Why or why not?
4. When have you had the chance to connect with people older than you in the church family—both older teens and adults? What was that experience like?
5. When have you had the chance to connect with people younger than you in the church family? What was that experience like?
6. How important is it to you to connect with people in the church family not connected with our youth group (adults or children)?
7. What's something you could do right now in our church to connect with people in the church family not connected with our youth group?
8. What are some ways you could organize other teenagers to create a ministry that reaches out to people in our church family?
9. How can intentionally connecting with the larger church family make space for God's Spirit to change your heart and mind?