

Living as 3C Christ-Followers

“Come, follow me.” (Matthew 4:19) When Jesus spoke these words to his first disciples, he called them into a relationship that would transform every area of their lives. Jesus would be their King, and they would become his Kingdom Community. They would set aside many of their former values, priorities, and practices to follow Jesus in the ways of his Kingdom. His teachings would be their guide, his love their motivation, and his life their model. He entrusted them with his mission of helping people find their way back to God. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, God used them to turn the world upside down.

So what does it mean to follow King Jesus as his Kingdom Community today? It means embracing three vital and life-changing connections, which we call The Three Connections of Community (3C's).

You + God You + the Church You + the World

We believe Jesus demonstrated the 3C's in his own life when he walked here on earth. As we learn to imitate his ways, we can expect to see ever-maturing expressions of the 3Cs in our own lives. As we mature, God calls us to lead others in the ways of Jesus.

The apostle Paul said, “Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1). This, in essence, is what it means to be a Christ-follower. Whether you are part of a physical location, Community online, a 3C Community, Community Freedom, or a leader in your own family and neighborhood, you can grow in the 3Cs for yourself and others as you follow the example of Christ. The beliefs and practices outlined in this resource are Community's roadmap on how to follow Jesus. This doesn't mean that we are a finished product. We are all “in-process” as 3C Christ-followers. We encourage you to pursue a lifestyle that leaves space to grow these beliefs and practices in your own life and family. Plan to commit to building up these 3 Connections in yourself so that you can grow in your relationship with God, the church, and the world. We hope that this resource can serve as a source of encouragement, challenge, and accountability as we help one another become more like Jesus.

We want to invite you now to read and respond to each YOU + connection.

Connection #1: You + God

Commitment to Jesus: Jesus calls each of us to follow him. When we put our faith in Jesus, we are pledging our allegiance to Jesus as King, turning from our former way of life (repentance), and seeking to follow him in the ways of his Kingdom. Part of our response to Jesus is to be baptized by immersion. This is a public way to say with our whole person that we want to be plunged into the reality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and give up our own ways of living to embrace Jesus' Kingdom way of life (Mark 1:9-11, Acts 2:38, Romans 6:1-14)

Practices that Grow Our Connection to God: Jesus engaged in practices that strengthened his connection with the Father. These practices included attending Synagogue every week to participate in corporate teaching and worship (Luke 4:16) and withdrawing to quiet places by himself where he could communicate with his Father through prayer and other spiritual disciplines (Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12). As growing 3C Christ-followers, we learn from Jesus' example by engaging in practices to grow our connection to God. We consistently participate in weekly adult, student, or kids services throughout our four Expressions where we can receive teaching from God's Word and join with other Christ-followers in worshipping him. We also pursue a closer connection with God through prayer and spiritual disciplines such as journaling, fasting, meditating on God's Word, silence, etc. We make this time with Jesus a priority in our lives and schedules.



Commitment to Scripture: Jesus often quoted from the written Word of God (Matthew 4:1-11, Matthew 22:34-40). He was familiar with Scripture and applied its values, principles, and ideals to everyday living. As Christ-followers, we learn from Jesus' example by continually increasing our understanding of God's Word through regular reading and study of the Bible. We can apply what we learn from God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We can let God's principles and commands guide every area of our lives, including our relationships (Matthew 7:12, Philippians 2:3-4, Colossians 3:12-14), sexuality (Genesis 2:21-24, Matthew 19:4-6, Hebrews 13:4), and finances (Matthew 6:19-24, 1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Kingdom Living that Honors God: Jesus taught and demonstrated how life in the Kingdom of God is meant to be lived and calls his followers to join him in his Kingdom way of living (Matthew 5-7, John 13:34-35, John 13:15). Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit to following Jesus in the ways of the Kingdom. We want our values, ethics, beliefs, and practices to be shaped by the Kingdom, not by the cultural norms or political ideologies of our world. We are mindful of how our words and actions reflect on Christ as we interact with people in person or on social media and seek to honor him in all things (Titus 2:7-8, Colossians 4:5-6).

Connection #2: You + the Church

Commitment to the Church: Jesus established the church as his Kingdom Community. While the decision to become a follower of Jesus involves a personal decision with eternal implications, the Christ-following life isn't solely about my own personal salvation. It's about following Jesus as part of his eternal Kingdom community. The New Testament writer Paul said that when we turn our lives towards Jesus, we become adopted children of God (Romans 8:15b, Galatians 3:26).

Through the work of the Spirit, we enter into an eternally binding relationship with God as his sons and daughters and into an eternally binding relationship with one another as brothers and sisters. We are family, called to love one another. As growing 3C Christ-followers, we are committed to this family. We do our best to make sure every person in the family can thrive. We care for the needs of one another. When conflicts arise, we follow the process Jesus outlined for addressing conflict directly through face-to-face conversations (Matthew 18:15-17, Matthew 5:23-24).

Practices that Grow Our Connection to the Church: Jesus engaged in practices that strengthened his connection with his followers. Jesus chose a small group of twelve to be in his inner circle of relationships. (Luke 6:12-16) He spent most of his time with these disciples, shared important conversations and events with them, and lived daily life with them. Jesus also served his followers by washing their feet. He performed this lowly act to set an example for them that they were to serve one another. (John 13:1-7).

As Christ-followers, we are committed to the type of genuine biblical community the first Christians practiced as described in Acts 2:41-47. Therefore, we make connecting in a Small Group and with one another a priority. We also believe God gives every Christ-follower spiritual gifts and talents that are to be used in service to others in order to build up his body, the church (I Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4). That's why we give our time to serve others in the church. We encourage everyone in our sphere of influence to join a Small Group and to use their gifts and talents to serve on a Ministry Team within an expression of COMMUNITY that we connect in or one that we feel called to help build up.

Care for Family: As Jesus was dying on the cross, he asked one of his disciples to care for his mother as if she was his own. This touching act of love demonstrated Jesus' sense of responsibility for his own family (John 19:25-27). As Christ-followers, caring for our families is a priority in our lives. We take seriously the responsibility for the spiritual formation of our children and their children. We can model a God-honoring commitment to our families (Ephesians 5:21-6:4, 1 Timothy 3:1-5) as we lead by example in all areas of our 3 connections of Community. We strive to practice them authentically in where we live, work and play. In turn, if we are parents, we will teach our own children to practice the 3 connections as well (Deuteronomy 6:1-2).



Discipling other Christ-followers: Within Jesus’ relational circle, he chose to invest more deeply in three men: Peter, James, and John. He included these three in some of the most personal parts of his life and ministry (Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 5:35-43, Mark 14:32-34). He prepared them to be leaders in the church (Matthew 16:17-19). He released them to do ministry in this world (John 17:18). Early church leaders like Paul adopted this model of discipleship (2 Timothy 2:2).

As growing Christ-followers, we can disciple others as well. We are committed to coming alongside other growing Christ-followers, children, students, and neighbors, discipling them through the 3 Connections of Community. When we invest in the lives of other people, we are growing Christ-followers and future leaders that can be released into their individual calling so that the Kingdom of God can flourish.

Connection #3: You + the World

Commitment to the World: Jesus sends his followers out to carry on the mission of helping people find their way back to God (John 20:21, Matthew 28:18-20). The people of God have always been blessed to be a blessing (Genesis 12:1-3). Therefore, as Christ-followers, we are committed to building friendships with people in the world who do not yet have a relationship with God.

Practices that Grow Our Connection to the World: Jesus engaged in simple practices that enabled him to build relationships with people and help them find their way back to God. As Christ-followers, we follow the example of Jesus who “blessed” the people and places he encountered every day. We believe you will find the following practices to be helpful in following Jesus’ example.

B: Begin with Prayer - The mission always begins with prayer. In this practice, we ask God to show us who to bless and then commit to regularly praying for those people.

L: Listen - In this practice, we intentionally listen to the people around us to learn their stories and understand their needs so that we can look for opportunities to love and serve them well.

E: Eat - Share a meal with people! Just like Jesus shared a meal with Matthew and his friends, we can eat with those we want to bless. There is something about food that opens doors to relationships.

S: Serve - As you listen to people and the places that matter to you, you will find ways to sacrificially serve them. You can also find ways to serve our community by joining in serving opportunities through Community Cares.

S: Story - Finally, share your story and your presence with people. Be ready to tell people about the work Jesus has done in your life—even if it’s still messy! In fact, especially if it’s still messy!

Engaging in the Work of Mercy and Justice: Jesus declared that he came to bring good news to the poor, the imprisoned, and the oppressed (Luke 4:16-21). As Christ-followers, we share in Jesus’ heart for those on the margins and engage in the work of caring for the vulnerable in our world, understanding it is an expression of love toward God himself (Matthew 25:34-35). We seek to join God in working against injustice so that everyone experiences freedom (Isaiah 58:6-10). We follow God’s command to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with him (Micah 6:8).

Giving Generously: Generosity fuels the mission, helping more and more people find their way back to God. Jesus endorsed the Old Testament practice of tithing—giving God the first 10% of everything you have (Matthew 23:23). But he went much further, challenging us to live financially generous lives. He cautioned against storing up wealth (Luke 12:13-21). He challenged us to be wise stewards of what we’ve been given (Matthew 25:14-28). He commended radical generosity (Luke 21:1-4). As Christ-followers we seek to align ourselves with these Biblical practices by living financially generous lives starting with a tithe and moving toward a life of radical generosity.



you+ Conversation Guide

Welcome to your YOU+ Conversation! We're so glad to be here with you in order to listen to what God is doing in your life. Our goal is to invite the Holy Spirit to move and draw out what next steps God might be inviting you to take. Let's begin with a simple prayer: **"Holy Spirit, come now and direct our conversation so that we can listen to your voice and follow whatever direction you're leading us in."** Amen. Let's begin!

Conversation Questions:

1. Before we met, you read through the 3C Document and questions. How was that for you? Have you ever done something like that before?

Let's talk about the section of your work where you explored the three connections: YOU+ God, YOU+ the church, and YOU+ the world.

2. As you think about your connection to God (YOU+ God), what image, picture, or phrase would you use to describe that relationship? In what ways do you hope your relationship with God would grow?

3. The YOU+ the Church section encourages us to grow in how we relate to and care for our church family and others we would consider family. How satisfied are you in each of those circles of relationships?

4. After thinking through the YOU+ the World section, what could it look like for you to bless others, seek justice, and live more generously in this season?

5. If you woke up tomorrow and your YOU+ dream to have flourishing connections with God, the Church and the World came true, what would be different?

6. What next steps could you take toward that future? Have you tried something in the past that was helpful?

7. What obstacles to these next steps might you experience?

Taking the next step:

What's the plan you'd like to create, and what goals or steps do you need to take to pursue this dream for your life? Let's create some goals that look forward: three months, six months, and twelve months. We'll then enter them through that link provided in the reminder email and your YOU+ Plan will be created!

I hope to _____ by the following date _____.

I hope to _____ by the following date _____.

I hope to _____ by the following date _____.

Who in your everyday life would be excited or honored to help you achieve this vision? It could be a spouse, friend, small group member, or leader.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Now that you've gone through this process, who would you like to guide through this same conversation we've just had? If so, who? E.g. spouse, friend, kids, neighbors, etc. Simply go to youplus.info to find everything you'll need!

Pray together to close



you+ Facilitator Notes

We are excited you are guiding someone else through a YOU+ conversation. Not only will this be a formative meeting for the participant, but it will also be an opportunity to grow and learn as the facilitator. As you prepare for the conversation, keep in mind some of the following points.

Keys to the Conversation

The first thing to remember is you don't have to have all the answers for the other person. Your job is to be a sounding board as you help the other person see themselves more clearly and how they see God at work in their lives. Relax, and let the conversation flow and when it is necessary, bring the conversation back around to the questions laid out in the guide. You don't have to get through every question. Your goal is to help the other person catch a glimpse of their life now, some idea of where they'd like it to go, and a couple of steps toward that hope.

Question 1

This conversation may be the first time someone has ever engaged in a one-on-one conversation about their growth as a follower of Jesus. The first question is designed to get a sense of how the YOU+ survey went for the participant.

Question 2

Question two may be a hard one for people. Try to avoid giving them examples. If they are struggling to come up with an image, let them know it's OK if it takes a moment. It may not be something they've ever considered.

Question 5

Question five asks the participant to think of one connection that might be most important for them to lean into in the next season. Many people will want to lean into all three. A good follow-up question might be, "Are there any other connections you might want to lean into over the next few months."

Question 6

Question six is designed for people to think about their future life - the way their life could look three months, six months, or two years from now. That's what You+ is all about - catching a God-sized dream for our lives. What would the sights, sounds, feelings, and relationships be like as a result?

Question 7

For question seven, you may have to help some people brainstorm some of the obstacles, while for others, you may need to help them see how those obstacles can be overcome. Everyone is different, and you may have to get them to linger a little longer on the potential issues that might have. Reassure them that no one gets this right all the time, and they don't have to be perfect to make progress.

Taking Next Steps

- Writing down the next steps and listing a time frame is key to this journey. It's been shown that people are more likely to do what they say they'll do if they've written it down in a formula similar to the one we've provided. Encourage them to write those down while you are together and enter them online via the provided link in your reminder email.
- Finally, we won't experience the YOU+ life alone. We need other people in our life who can ask about our progress and encourage us along the way. Help them think about who those people will be for them. Encourage them to share their experience with someone else and even guide them through a similar conversation. If they agree to do that, we'll provide them with resources to facilitate a YOU+ conversation.



you+ Facilitator Notes

The Three Connections

You+ God

The You+ God connection of COMMUNITY is about you developing a relationship with God and growing in spiritual disciplines. As we grow in this connection, we will see ourselves becoming more and more like Jesus.

You+ the Church

The You+ Church connection of COMMUNITY is about connecting with others to find your way back to God, connect in a small group, or serve others on a team. As we grow in this connection, we develop community with others and the skills to help even more people find their way back to God.

You+ the World

The You+ World connection of COMMUNITY is about seeing God's calling to be a catalyst for transformation in our communities, both locally and globally. As we grow in this connection, we hope to meet immediate needs, develop relationships with those who are different than us, and work toward our communities becoming places of peace, justice, and compassion.

You+ Next Steps Map

This is a list of options to help figure out some next steps in the conversation if someone is struggling with what to do. For example, if the conversation turns to, "I want to deepen my relationship with God, but I'm not sure how?". Go to "You+ God" and see if one of the options will fit the situation being discussed. This is not an exhaustive list but a starting point for taking next steps.

You + God

- Regular weekly attendance
- Spiritual Practices: Sabbath, Fasting, Prayer, Bible Reading from the Community Daily
- Baptism - sign-up for the next Baptism class
- Try the Alpha Course

You + The Church

- Join a Small Group: Alpha, Rooted, Explore Community
- Explore Leadership with Adults, Students, or Kids.
- Join a Ministry Team serving adults, students or kids.
- Discover your gifts and talents, and passions God has given you to B.L.E.S.S. others.

You + The World

- B.L.E.S.S. - Who are you walking through this strategy with?
- Generosity - What does your percentage look like now and how would you like to see it grow?
- Community Cares - Who would you like to partner with locally to serve your community?
- Global - Sponsoring a child, partnering with Philippine Frontline Ministries or Compassion International



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LISTEN ENGAGE ACT DISCOVER

You can L.E.A.D. a YOU+ Conversation!

LISTEN

Active Listening

David Augsburger writes: “Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.” When we listen to people and they feel heard, they will feel loved, and that’s exactly what we want to happen during every YOU+ Conversation.

There are three levels of listening. Internal listening, Focused listening, and Global listening. Internal listening is when you listen to another person, but you are primarily focused on how the information the speaker is sharing impacts you. The question you might be asking is, “What does this mean to me?” The second level of listening is called Focused listening. A Focused listener is paying attention to the speaker and how what they are sharing impacts the speaker. The question a focused listener might ask themselves while listening to the speaker is, “What does this mean to them?” Finally, a Global listener is paying attention to the body language of the speaker and on what is not being said. They might ask themselves, “What is the emotion being shared?” We practice good listening when we listen at level two and three.

During your YOU+ conversation, there will be moments when you’ve listened well on level two and three, but you’re not sure you understand them fully. A simple way to draw out more information is to ask, “tell me more about that” or “can you say more about that.”

After listening to what someone has to say, you can offer a summary of what you have heard them say, which allows them to clarify what they mean or even help the speaker understand their own thoughts and emotions better.

Asking “How did you come to hold that understanding?” feels less threatening than asking, “Why do you think that?” “How” is inviting them to tell their story.

Embrace the Pause

Expect silence during this conversation - in fact, celebrate moments of silence. It means the participant is processing your question and wants to give a thoughtful answer. If you struggle with silence and find yourself rushing to fill it with talking, here are a few strategies for developing that conversational skill.

The first strategy would be to ask the question and then find a specific spot at the table or even on your body - like your toe, and count to 10. This gives you a single focus for channeling your nervous energy. Another similar strategy would be to distract yourself by counting your teeth with you tongue.

Another strategy would be to bring your attention to your breathing and notice the sensation of breathing. Notice the temperature change at the tip of your nose as you breathe in and out. Feel the rise and fall of your chest. Let your jaw and shoulders relax. Don’t try to control your breathing, just notice it. This will help you stay calm, relaxed, and mindful of yourself which will help you be a better listener.

If the participant hasn’t given you an answer in 10 seconds, then you might ask the question again with slight rephrasing. You might also acknowledge that it’s OK to take some time processing and answering some of the questions you’ll be asking during your time together.



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ENGAGE

Body Language Matters

Even when we are not speaking, we are communicating. Often subconsciously, we send nonverbal signals that provide clues to other people about who we are and what we find important.

When facilitating a YOU+ conversation, it's important that you intentionally create a space where trust and open communication is embraced. Being aware of what you are non verbally communicating will help you demonstrate that you understand and can relate to what is being shared. Body language that communicates warmth and trustworthiness signals that you are inviting and interested in what the other person is saying.

Try practicing a posture of openness and curiosity during your YOU+ conversation. This can look like physically leaning in to demonstrate interest, a smile or nod to provide encouragement, open-palm hand gestures to communicate openness and honesty. All of these tools will help you guide the conversation and provide a space where the other person feels comfortable sharing their thoughts and dreaming for their future.

Reframe "Should" Statements

Look out for any "I should statement" made by the other person during your YOU+ Conversation. A should statement often reveals an underlying negative thinking pattern of guilt, self-doubt, or anxiety. Examples might be, "I should read my Bible more," or "I ought to pray every morning." It may be that a person making a "should" statement feels guilty about not praying or reading the Bible more regularly, and these statements can cause more stress.

Help them reframe their thinking with the end goal in mind and what creative steps they could take to achieve it. Making a different statement can reinforce the feelings and concepts of personal agency and empowerment. For example, help them reframe their statement to say, "I would like to read my Bible more, and I want to find some rhythms that would make that achievable for me."

Be thoughtful about the language you use as a facilitator. Words like should, ought, and must are common guilt-based ways of communicating that unintentionally create feelings of guilt, anxiety, and shame in others. It can be hard to leave this kind of communication behind, but the more aware we are of its presence in regular conversation, the more empowering our communication can become.

ACT

Guide with Intentional Questions

A YOU+ conversation is a meaningful discussion that leads to discovery. When facilitating a conversation, you will talk with the participant about their responses to the questions prompted in their YOU+ survey. The conversation will move toward greater meaning and discovery when you ask intentional follow-up questions.

During the conversation, you will talk with the participant about how they currently feel in their connections with God, the Church and the World. As they share their reflections, listen for key words or phrases that stand out to you. These could be things that describe where they feel confident, or areas they feel less sure. Then, encourage them to share their point of view by asking why they feel that way. If they mention something told to them by someone else, prompt them to share that story.



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For example, a question in the YOU+ survey says this:

“After thinking through the YOU+ the World section, what do you think it might look like for you to serve God and bless others in a regular way?”

Perhaps the participant responds with “I don’t know how to do this in a regular way. I’ve been told I am encouraging when I pray for others, but I’ve never felt sure whether that was a way to serve. I’d like to bless others, but I haven’t spent a lot of time thinking about how to do that.”

As you read their response, what phrases stand out to you?

- Notice that they say “I don’t know how”. You can ask them to share their perspective and help them identify potential obstacles by asking “Why do you think it’s been hard for you to discover how to serve God?”
- They mention “I’ve been told”. Encourage them to share a story from this experience by saying “I’d love to hear more about that moment. Do you remember what prompted them to say that to you?”
- Help them take note of their current experience by asking them to share how they feel in this area currently. This question could sound like “It seems like you would like to bless others, and you think prayer might be a way you could do that. How significant would you say prayer is in your own faith currently?”
- Guide toward discovery and action by helping them identify next steps. Notice that they said “I haven’t spent a lot of time”. You could ask “What are 2 or 3 things you could do to help you discover if prayer is a way that you can serve God and bless others?”

By asking intentional follow up questions, you will encourage the participant to share their perspective and story, identify potential obstacles, discover their own strengths and determine a path forward.

Avoid leading questions

Some of the questions you’ll be asking as a facilitator will require the participant to reflect and remember moments in their life. They will have received all of the questions beforehand, but they still might not know how to answer some of them. In these moments, it’s important not to panic and rush to fill in the silence with your words.

One question that may take the participant some time to answer reads this way, “As you think about your connection to God, what image, picture or phrase would you use to describe that relationship?” I remember the first time someone asked me that question, it took me several minutes to answer and then explain what and why I chose that image. It’s a question that requires a person to reflect on their life and their relationship with or without God. They may be struggling to synthesize their thoughts, and may also be negotiating how honest they want to be.

Resist the temptation to offer common examples like a cosmic cop or an absentee landlord. We want people to reflect on their relationship with God, and when we give them examples it might steer them toward stereotypical answers. Instead, you might share that it was difficult, at first, for you to answer this question. Let them know that there is no right answer and assure them that there are many examples in the Bible and church history of people who felt like they didn’t have much of a relationship with God. The best answer is an honest one.



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LISTEN ENGAGE ACT DISCOVER

You can L.E.A.D. a YOU+ Conversation!

DISCOVER

Be Open to Where Questions Lead

When you facilitate a YOU+ conversation, expect to be surprised! As you prepare and pray prior to the conversation, you may have an idea of specific questions or areas you believe will be important to focus on. This preparation will help you guide the conversation with intentionality and be aware of the participant's unique story and perspective. However, during the conversation it might feel natural to guide the conversation toward a specific answer or outcome. It's important that you avoid steering the conversation in this way, and instead rely on intentional questions to encourage the participant toward their own discovery.

Releasing control over the outcome of the conversation will require patience, humility, and trust. Prior to the conversation, you may want to spend some time in prayer asking that God would help you surrender the outcome of the conversation and help you expand your perspective to make room for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Help Identify Dreams and Craft Goals

As you guide the YOU+ conversation, you will use the tools described in this guide to help the participant identify dreams that they may have been previously unaware of or did not feel ready to name. The final portion of the YOU+ conversation is a significant moment where you will have the opportunity to help the participant create a plan to help them realize their YOU+ dream. Using the information you have discovered through listening and asking intentional questions, guide the participant to identify 3-4 next steps that look forward: three months, six months, and 12 months.

Ask the participant to reflect back on their answers and what has been discovered during the conversation. Discuss tangible next steps that, if achieved, would help them move forward in significant ways. Prompt the participant to write these next steps down with specific goal dates. These tangible goals will then be entered online during your conversation through the provided link in your reminder email, and a YOU+ plan for the next year that will lead toward the fulfillment of their YOU+ dream will be created!

