

Man to Man



CONNECT GROUPS

Introduction

Have you ever stopped to consider the people that God has used to make a positive difference in your world? Most of us can identify at least one or two people whom God has used to truly make an impact through their presence in our lives. God did not design us to go through this life alone. Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (NIV). No one better understood this dynamic than Jesus when he made himself a servant and walked in a very intentional relationship with a few men. Mark 10:45 says, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” The result was a world radically changed. You too can change your world by following the example of Jesus and taking steps to intentionally walk with other men whom God has purposefully placed in your life. We know we are better together and that God builds his Kingdom through intentional relationships.

Jesus extended an invitation to a few men to come and walk with Him and in doing so demonstrated what relationship with the Father looked like. He took those who responded—who wanted to walk with Him—and became very intentional about pouring into their lives. You already have some people in your life who want to walk with you. We simply want to give you some tools to make it easy to pour into them in ways that will change both their lives and yours.

In a “Man to Man” Connect Group, you will have the opportunity to identify three or four men in your sphere of influence and invite them to walk together with you for a semester.

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! ...Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)

Come join us and change your world, one man at a time!

Week 1: Love God/Jesus

Thought:

God is most glorified when we make Him our greatest joy—passionately pursuing Him daily through prayer, worship, and the Word. Praising God is the highest calling of humanity and our eternal vocation. When we seek our joy in Christ, we find that He can satisfy us in a way that nothing else in the world can match. And as we love Him and allow Him to love us, we become a mirror of His glory and can shine as a bright light throughout the dark world around us.

Scripture:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, love your neighbor as yourself. Luke 10:27 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. Psalm 42:1-2 (ESV)

Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4

Discussion Questions:

- Using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate yourself on how much you express your love for God? Explain your answer.
- In what ways do you pursue and prioritize God in your life? When do you experience God's presence most?
- Discuss how God's love for you has changed the way you are able to love others.

Action Step:

What practical step can you take this week to grow closer to God? Set aside time every day to intentionally pursue Him through prayer, worship, and the Word.

Week 2: Be Physically Healthy

Thought:

The Bible says that our bodies are “the temple of the Holy Spirit” and that we should offer them as a “living sacrifice.” While we are called to honor God with our bodies, we often get distracted by the busyness of life and forget to prioritize taking care of ourselves. A poor diet, insufficient exercise, lack of sleep, stress, alcohol, and tobacco can all deplete our energy levels and deteriorate our physical health. In order to live meaningful lives serving God, we must do our best to maintain the bodies He has given us.

Scripture:

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NLT

I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:27 NLT

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Romans 12:1

Discussion Questions:

- Using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate your physical health? Explain your answer.
- Do you have a weekly exercise routine?

What can you do to establish or improve it?

- What does your current diet look like? What modifications do you need to make to fuel your body well (e.g. including healthy meats, vegetables, fruit, water)?

- Annual doctor and dentist visits are a must. What other ways can you improve your physical health?

Action Step:

What is one adjustment you can make that will have the biggest positive impact on your health? Incorporate a new form of exercise into your weekly routine, and make one healthy change in your diet. Intentionally set aside time this week to make a plan for healthy living.

Week 3: Live with Purity

Thought:

As men of God, we are called to a life of purity. Most people associate purity with sexual morality (body), and that's certainly a big part of it. For example, over 50 percent of men regularly view pornography. However, in addition to our bodily purity, we need to think about purity as it applies to our minds, our souls, and our faith. When we seek to love God above everything else, including ourselves, we will become increasingly pure and holy. This will enable us to become the men God called us to be.

Scripture:

Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. 2 Corinthians 7:1

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Matthew 5:8

But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. 1 Peter 1:15

All who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure. 1 John 3:3

Discussion Questions:

- Using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate your purity? Explain your answer.
- In what areas of your life do you struggle with purity (e.g. your words, relationships, finances, thoughts, physical actions)?
- How is your purity affected by the TV/movies you watch, the books you read, the music you listen to, and the places you go?
- Discuss how you can begin to daily pursue purity in the areas in which you struggle.

Action Step:

What practical step can you take this week to live a life of purity? Memorize one of the Scriptures above. Decide in advance that when you are tempted by impurity, you will meditate on this Scripture instead of choosing to give in to temptation. When you struggle, reach out to one of the men in your group to help you stay accountable.

Week 4: Be a Positive Influence

Thought:

We were all created in God's image to make Him known to the people around us. We have the opportunity to influence other people's lives every day through the words we say, the things we do, and the places we go. How we live out each day determines the kind of influence we have. We should always aim to live in a way that makes others want to know Jesus!

Scripture:

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. Colossians 4:5-6

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible...I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the Gospel, that I may share in its blessings. 1 Corinthians 9:19, 22b-23

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." 1 Corinthians 15:33

Discussion Questions:

- Using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate your positive influence? Explain your answer.
- Who are you influencing with your words, your actions, your relationships, and your passions? How do you think the way you live influences them?
- Who is currently influencing you? How does the way they live impact you?

Action Step:

Action Step:

What is one intentional step you can take this week to be a positive influence to those around you? Make a list of people who influence you in a positive way, and make plans to connect with one of them this week. Set boundaries to limit the influence of people who impact your life negatively.

Week 5: Build Strong Relationships

Thought:

Strong relationships are an integral part of personal growth, helping others grow, and advancing God's Kingdom. As men of God, we need strong relationships with other godly men for support, accountability, encouragement, prayer, making decisions, and developing ideas. It's critical that we love others and feel loved. We are all bound to stumble and experience loss in life. When we do, these relationships will give us the support we need.

Scripture:

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Discussion Questions:

- Using a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate yourself on having strong relationships? Explain your answer.
- Strong relationships with other men are critical, but, as men, we sometimes think of ourselves as self-sufficient. What are some of the reasons you might hold back from building strong relationships with other men? Discuss what you can do to break down those barriers.

Action Step:

Who are a few men you know with whom you can build and develop strong, Godly relationships? Call one of them and make plans to connect this week in person.

Week 6: Share Your Faith

Thought:

God has called every one of us to share our faith and evangelize. Sharing the Good News and bringing people to the Lord is exactly what we were put on this earth to do. It's important to know what evangelism is and what it is not. Evangelism is not knowing everything and convincing others that you are right. Evangelism is sharing how God has transformed your life! You may be able to open the door to discussion by asking someone about their spiritual beliefs or who Jesus is to them, or by sharing your story with them. Whenever you have a window of opportunity or can create one, be faithful and go for it.

Scripture:

Jesus said to His followers, "Go everywhere in the world, and tell the Good News to everyone." **Mark 16:15 (NCV)**

Through thick and thin, keep your hearts at attention, in adoration before Christ, your Master. Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you're living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy. **1 Peter 3:15 (MSG)**

Discussion Questions:

- Using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate yourself on sharing your faith? Explain your answer.
- Is it easy for you to share your faith? Why or why not?
- If given the opportunity, could you share your story in two minutes or less?
- What are some ways you have been able to open the door to share your story with a non-believer?

Action Step:

Can you share your story in two minutes or less? Work on this throughout the week. Start by briefly explaining who you were before Jesus, then spend the rest of the time focusing on what Jesus did in your life and who you are now because of Him.in person.

Week 7: Develop Your Character

Thought:

In today's society, it often seems acceptable to do less than your best, pass the buck rather than take the blame, take advantage of other people, not follow through on what you say you will do, or even lie. As men of God, we are called to live excellent lives of discipline, respect, honesty, integrity, dependability, accountability, and honor. Having a strong character means always doing the right thing—even when nobody is watching.

Scripture:

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. **Philippians 4:8-9***

*For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man. **2 Corinthians 8:21 (ESV)***

*The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them. **Proverbs 11:3 (ESV)***

*The LORD detests lying lips, but He delights in those who tell the truth. **Proverbs 12:22 (NLT)***

Discussion Questions:

- Using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate the strength of your character? Explain your answer.
- Our character is compromised when our beliefs and actions do not align.
- What are some areas in which you sometimes compromise your character?
- What changes do you need to make so that your actions will reflect your beliefs in your home, relationships, workplace, and community?

Action Step:

What character traits do you want to possess as a man of God? Take time this week to write them down. Next to each, write down steps you need to take to develop those traits to become the man know you want to be. Ask someone you know, respect, and trust to help you identify any blind spots you have in your character.

Week 8: Steward Your Resources

Thought:

God has given each of us time, talents, and abilities to steward for His glory. He wants us to manage and utilize these three things, along with the additional resources they provide: our money and our possessions. Managing our resources wisely and using them to benefit others more than ourselves are great ways to show our gratitude to God for all He has given us. God will continue to give us more to manage as we are faithful with what He has already provided.

Scripture:

When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.
Luke 12:48b (NLT)

God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. **1 Peter 4:10 (NLT)**

Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful. **1 Corinthians 4:2 (NLT)**

“Well done, my good servant!” his master replied. “Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.” **Luke 19:17**

Discussion Questions:

- Using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate yourself on managing your resources? Explain your answer.
- Do you give the first and the best of what you have to God? What do you think it looks like to steward your resources well?
- In what ways are you using your time, talents, and resources to serve God? Share a specific example for each of the three.

Action Step:

What is one change you need to make to better utilize the time, talents, and resources God has given you? Take a practical step toward that change this week.

Week 9: Be Productive

Thought:

Being productive is exhilarating; it's living each day on purpose. God has called us to live productive lives so that we can become everything He created us to be. Productivity requires us to leave our comfort zones and step out in faith, trusting that God has greater things in store. It also requires us to commit to the process of becoming productive, to dig in and work hard on the tasks God has put in our hands. To start, we need a plan. Let's begin by clarifying goals and identifying practical steps that will take us from where we are to where we want to be.

Scripture:

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and He will establish your plans.
Proverbs 16:3

Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty. **Proverbs 21:5 (NLT)**

May He grant your heart's desires and make all your plans succeed.
Psalms 20:4 (NLT)

Discussion Questions:

- Using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate yourself on being productive? Explain your answer.
- We need to establish goals in several key areas: our relationship with the Lord, our marriage and family, our business and community relationships, our health, our finances, and our service and generosity towards others.
- In what areas of your life do you think you have a solid plan to meet your long-term goals?
- In what areas of your life do you feel like you are a little out of control and don't have a specific plan?
- What are some effective ways to make sure you reach your goals?

Action Step:

This week, set aside time to make a plan to increase productivity in your life. Set daily, weekly, monthly, and annual goals, and eliminate anything that is standing in your way from achieving those goals. Pray daily for wisdom, direction, and perseverance, and trust God to take you where He wants you to be.

Week 10: Develop Humility

Thought:

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less and giving God glory rather than yourself. Jesus calls us to be humble and to be confident that, by His grace, we are equipped for good works that advance His Kingdom. We are ambassadors of Christ, and He is trusting us to minister to people. He wants to use us to connect others to Himself, and our humility is key for His love and presence to reach others through us. There are four important areas in which we need to foster humility: our thoughts, our position, our words, and our actions.

Scripture:

But He gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble." James 4:6

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. Proverbs 11:2

For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Luke 14:11

The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life. Proverbs 22:4 (ESV)

Discussion Questions:

- Using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate yourself on humility? Explain your answer.
- Pride is the very opposite of humility. It is the desire to exalt ourselves. In what areas of your life is pride an issue?
- What do you need to do to defeat the spirit of pride in your life and clothe yourself in humility?

Action Step:

This week, be intentionally humble with your thoughts, positions, words, and actions. Begin by paying close attention to your conversations. Focus on encouraging people, and give credit to God and others.

Week 11: Learn Ways to Add Value

Thought:

If we add value to people, we earn the opportunity to be influential in their lives. Jesus called us “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13), which means we’re here to make things better in the lives of others. Jesus added value to people by serving them and meeting their needs. He gave the blind sight, healed the sick, turned water into wine, fed the hungry, calmed storms, and spoke life-giving words. As He served in these ways, He grew in His influence and saved many people. While Jesus often met needs supernaturally, He added value to people in practical ways as well.

Here are five examples of ways we can follow in His footsteps:

- Help people find their purpose (Step Two of the Growth Track Discover Your Design)
- Help people develop their professional skills
- Listen, encourage, and care about what others care about
- Help people reach practical goals
- Be generous with our resources (time, talent, treasure) to meet others’ practical needs.

Scripture:

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 1 Corinthians 9:19

The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:40

Discussion Questions:

- Using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest, how would you rate yourself on serving others and adding value to their lives? Explain your answer.
- In what ways have you added value to others' lives? What kind of effect did it have on them?
- How has serving others affected you personally?

Action Step:

Considering the practical ways you can add value to others that were discussed today, how can you serve someone you know this week? Think of someone specific, contact them, and make plans to help meet a need in their life.

Week 12: Go Serve

Thought:

Jesus set the example of leading a servant life in Mark 10:45: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Jesus changed the world by intentionally serving a few men. Following the example of Jesus, you, too, can change your world by intentionally walking in a mentoring relationship with a few other men. Your investment in others can make a big difference!

A few notes about mentorship we see reflected in the life of Jesus:

- Mentoring is easy. It can be done anytime, anywhere. Jesus simply walked through life with a few men and demonstrated what relationship with the Father looked like.
- Mentoring is relational. It can include your existing relationships and center around your passions or profession. Jesus’ group of disciples included both men He’d known since childhood and others He met as He began His ministry. Some of their most meaningful conversations were shared over a meal or while traveling.
- Mentoring is effective! Life change happens in the context of relationships. Think about Peter’s journey from fisherman to apostle. His close relationship with Jesus challenged him, refined him, solidified his faith, helped him discover his purpose, and prepared him for a life of impact. A once weak, doubt-filled man became the rock upon which Jesus built His Church. Mentoring can change the world!

Scripture:

Jesus said to His followers, “Go everywhere in the world, and tell the Good News to everyone.” Mark 16:15 (NCV)

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen. 1 Peter 4:10-11 (NLT)

Discussion Questions:

- How do you feel the Lord is leading you towards stepping into a mentorship role? Does this include leading a Man to Man Connect Group next semester? Discuss what steps you feel led to take.
- Thinking about the ways Jesus mentored the disciples and the ways you have been mentored through this group, what most excites you about the opportunity to mentor others?
- What part of being mentored this semester has been most impactful for you?

Action Step:

This week, identify a few men in your life who you would like to pour into, grow with, and help strengthen. Ask God to lead you to your next steps for mentoring, consider leading a Man to Man Connect Group, and prepare to boldly move toward a life of impact.

