CONNECTED



A THEOLOGY OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

FINDING YOUR PEOPLE,
DISCERNING YOUR CIRCLE,
and BECOMING SOMEONE WORTH
BEING CONNECTED *to*

MARK MOORE JR.

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A Theology of Healthy Relationships

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Finding Your People, Discerning Your Circle, and Becoming Someone Worth Being Connected To

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How This Book Works

Each chapter follows the same rhythm, so you always know where you are:

1. **Opening Scripture.** The passage the chapter is built on.
2. **The Teaching.** The core principle and how to live it.
3. **The Working Word.** One Hebrew or Greek word that unlocks the passage.
4. **Disconnected vs. Connected.** How each mindset thinks, talks, and acts.
5. **Common Mistakes.** Where sincere people go wrong, even when they agree.
6. **Where It Shows Up.** What the chapter looks like at home, with friends, and at work or church.
7. **The Tool.** A worksheet, audit, or exercise you can use this week.
8. **Chapter Review.** The Connection Point and Reflection Questions.

INTRODUCTION

Contact Without Connection

We are living in the most technologically connected generation in human history. And we may be the loneliest.

You can have thousands of followers, hundreds of contacts in your phone, and twenty active group chats. You can still have nobody to call when your world falls apart at two in the morning.

We have mastered contact without connection. We follow people without knowing them. We watch people without walking with them. We like people without loving them.

The real problem

The church isn't immune. You can worship beside people, serve beside people, and sit beside people for years, and still have no one who actually knows you.

Here's why that matters: **the Christian life was never designed to be lived alone.** Jesus doesn't only save us *from* something. He saves us *into* something: a body, a family, a people.

Most of us have been taught a great deal about God. Very few of us were taught a theology of *people*. So our relationships run on feelings instead of wisdom. We choose friends by chemistry and convenience, give deep trust to people we met last week, cut off people we should have forgiven, and hold on to people we should have released.

Three parts, seven chapters

This book gives you a biblical way to think about the people in your life. It moves in three parts:

1. **Designed for Connection.** Your need for people is God's design, and God sends people for different reasons. (Chapters 1–2)
2. **Discerning Your Circle.** Everybody can be loved, but not everybody gets the same access, and being spiritual doesn't automatically make you good at people. (Chapters 3–4)
3. **Becoming Someone Worth Being Connected To.** How to handle friction, how to respond when people change, and how to receive the help God sends. (Chapters 5–7)

Watch the order. You can't discern your circle until you accept that you need one. And you can't become safe for other people until you know what healthy connection looks like.

What this book is not

This is not a manual for cutting people off. Our culture already has plenty of those. The goal is the opposite: to help you love everybody well, place everybody wisely, and become the kind of person somebody else can safely be connected to.

How to read this book

Every chapter ends with a **Connection Point**, one sentence worth remembering, and **Reflection Questions** to work through on your own or with a group. Each chapter also includes a **Tool** you can use the same week.

One warning before we begin. It's very easy, during a book about relationships, to become an expert on everybody else. You'll read a paragraph and think, *My cousin needs to hear this.* Put your cousin down. Read it for yourself first.

Let's get connected.

The Connection Scorecard

Before you read, find out where you stand. Score each statement honestly, from **1 (not true of me)** to **5 (absolutely true of me)**. Better yet, ask someone who knows you well to score you too, then compare. The gaps between your answers are often more revealing than the scores.

#	Chapter	Statement	Score (1–5)
1	You Need People	At least one person knows the real me, not just my public version.	
2	Who Sent You?	I understand why the key people in my life are there, and I don't expect every person to be everything.	
3	Who's in Your Boat?	The people closest to me can handle where God is taking me.	
4	People Skills Are Spiritual Skills	I give access based on proven trust, not chemistry or how fast we clicked.	
5	You're Getting on My Nerves	I can tell the difference between a relationship that's difficult and one that's dangerous.	
6	Match My Energy?	Other people's behavior doesn't decide my character or my mood.	
7	You Won't Have to Do This by Yourself	I let people help me carry what's heavy instead of carrying it alone.	

Reading your results

- **Add up each part.** Chapters 1–2 = Designed for Connection. Chapters 3–4 = Discerning Your Circle. Chapters 5–7 = Becoming Someone Worth Being Connected To. Your lowest part is your starting point.
- **Circle every 1 or 2.** Those are the places you feel most alone. Read those chapters first, and do their Tools before moving on.
- **Watch for the pattern.** High scores in Part One but low in Part Two often mean you love people but place them poorly. High in Part Two but low in Part Three often means you're careful, but closed.

Total score	What it usually means
7–16	You may be more isolated than you realize. Start with Chapter 1 and go slowly.
17–26	You have real relationships with some weak spots. Focus on your lowest part first.
27–35	You're well connected. Use this book to strengthen others, and look for whose corner you can carry.

Keep this page. Score yourself again at the end of your 30-Day Connection Plan and see what moved.

PART ONE

DESIGNED FOR CONNECTION

"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone." — Genesis 2:18 (KJV)

In this part: Chapter 1, You Need People · Chapter 2, Who Sent You?

Before you can discern your circle, you have to accept that you need one. These first two chapters lay the foundation: your need for people is God's design, not your weakness, and the people God sends come for different reasons.

CHAPTER 1

You Need People

A THEOLOGY OF CONNECTION · CHAPTER 1 OF 7

"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." — Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 (KJV)

I've been a pastor long enough to notice a pattern. The people who struggle the most are rarely the ones with the biggest problems. They're the ones with the fewest people.

Two people can face the same diagnosis, the same layoff, or the same betrayal. One comes through bruised but intact. The other comes through broken. Very often the difference isn't faith, talent, or money. It's who was standing next to them when it happened.

Here's the foundational idea of this book: **God designed you to need what He placed in other people.**

The myth of the self-made life

Our culture says the more mature you are, the less you need anybody. Scripture says something different. There are three relational postures, and most of us move through all of them:

- **Dependence** says, "Do everything for me." That's immaturity.
- **Independence** says, "I don't need anybody." That's usually pride wearing the costume of strength.
- **Interdependence** says, "I know what God has put in me, and I recognize what God has put in you." That's maturity.

Most of us were taught that independence is the finish line. It's a waypoint. The goal isn't to need no one. It's to need the right people in the right ways, and to be needed in return.

More connected, more alone

In 2023 the U.S. Surgeon General issued a public advisory calling loneliness and isolation an epidemic. In the most connected generation in history, we've learned contact without connection.

Church doesn't automatically fix that. Proximity isn't intimacy. Sitting next to someone isn't the same as doing life with them.

It was never good

In Genesis 1, God makes light and calls it good. Land, good. Plants, good. Sun, moon, and animals, good. Then, for the first time, God calls something *not good*: a man alone (Genesis 2:18).

Watch the timing. This happens before the fall. Adam isn't lonely because of sin or trauma. He has purpose, provision, and unbroken fellowship with God, and God still says something is missing.

Many of us say, "All I need is Jesus." As a statement about salvation, that's exactly right. As a philosophy of relationships, God Himself disagrees. Adam had God, and God still said he needed somebody. **Your need for people is not a spiritual deficiency. It's a design feature.**

God hides answers inside people

Solomon didn't say two are more pleasant than one. He said two are *better*. Connection increases capacity. Deuteronomy 32:30 puts it this way: one can chase a thousand, but two can put ten thousand to flight. Connection doesn't just add. It multiplies.

Sometimes God answers a prayer with a person. Moses needed a voice, and God sent Aaron. Naomi needed hope, and God sent Ruth. David needed an ally in a hostile palace, and God sent Jonathan. Paul needed credibility, and God sent Barnabas. A paralyzed man needed a way to Jesus, and God sent four friends.

So be careful how you treat people. You never know which answer to your prayer is sitting across the table. And remember: you may be the answer to someone else's.

The problem isn't falling. It's falling alone.

"For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow." Solomon doesn't say *if one of them is weak*. He says *if they fall*. Falling is a normal part of being human. Strong people fall. Gifted, faithful, disciplined people fall.

So the real question isn't "Will I have a hard season?" You will. The question is "When I do, who will be close enough to notice?"

Isolation rarely announces itself. It shows up in reasonable language: "I'm protecting my peace." "People are fake." "I just keep to myself." Some of that is healthy. But many of us have used the language of boundaries to justify isolation.

Healthy	Unhealthy
Privacy: some things aren't for everyone	**Secrecy:** nothing is for anyone
Boundaries: I decide who gets access and how much	**Walls:** nobody gets access at all
Solitude: I withdraw to restore	**Isolation:** I withdraw to avoid

Jesus withdrew to pray, but He never lived in isolation. He had the crowds, the seventy, the twelve, and an inner circle of three. Jesus had boundaries without becoming disconnected.

Who's carrying your corner?

A man in Mark 2 needs Jesus but can't get to Jesus. "They come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four" (Mark 2:3). His healing begins with four friends whose names we never learn. When the house was too crowded, they climbed the roof, tore it open, and lowered him down.

Then Mark writes: "When Jesus saw *their* faith" (Mark 2:5). Not his faith. Theirs. Sometimes the greatest gift God gives you isn't stronger faith. It's a friend with enough faith to carry you until yours comes back.

A mat has four corners, and everyone needs all four covered:

1. **The intercessor.** Someone who actually prays for you, not someone who types "praying" and keeps scrolling.
2. **The truth-teller.** "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:6). If everyone agrees with you, you don't have community. You have an audience.
3. **The celebrator.** Someone who doesn't get strange when God blesses you, who can clap without comparing.
4. **The stayer.** "A friend loveth at all times" (Proverbs 17:17). Someone who can handle the version of you that's on the mat.

You can't be helped where you can't be seen

Many of us want people close enough to celebrate us but not close enough to see us. That's not possible. James writes, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16).

Not everybody needs to know everything. But somebody should know something. If no one knows where you're bleeding, no one knows where to apply pressure.

Your limitation is an invitation

Paul describes the church as a body: "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee" (1 Corinthians 12:21). Every part has a strength and a limitation, by design. Your limitation creates space for somebody else's gift. **God didn't give you everything, because He wanted to give you somebody.**

The Working Word: *'Ezer* (Help)

When God says He will make Adam "an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18), the Hebrew is *'ezer kenegdo*. *'Ezer* means help or helper, and it is not a weak word. The Old Testament uses it most often for God Himself: "My help cometh from the LORD" (Psalm 121:2); "He is our help and our shield" (Psalm 33:20).

Kenegdo means "corresponding to him," standing face to face. Watch what that means: the help God designed for us comes through someone who can look us in the eye. Needing an *'ezer* isn't a sign that something is wrong with you. It's how God built the first human relationship.

Disconnected vs. Connected

	Disconnected	Connected
Sees needing help as	Weakness	Design
When life falls apart	Hides it	Lets someone in
Calls withdrawal	"Protecting my peace"	What it is
Asks of community	"What can they do for me?"	"What can I bring?"
Measures friendship by	How many people are around	Who would carry a corner

Common Mistakes

- **Confusing a crowd with a circle.** A full calendar and a packed church can hide an empty inner life. Count the people who know the real you, not the people you know.
- **Waiting to be found.** Many people want deep friendship but never initiate it. Connection usually starts with someone taking the first, slightly awkward step. Let that be you.
- **Making it one-directional.** Looking only for people who can carry you turns friendship into a transaction. Ask whose corner you're carrying.

Where It Shows Up

- **At home:** A spouse can't carry all four corners. Healthy marriages are surrounded by other healthy relationships.
- **With friends:** Notice which corners are empty. Most people have celebrators but no truth-tellers, or acquaintances but no stayers.
- **At work or church:** Leaders are often the most isolated people in the room. If you lead, someone needs permission to ask how you're really doing.

Tool: The Four Corners Audit

Write one name next to each corner. If a corner is empty, write the name of someone who could grow into that role, and one step you'll take this week.

Corner	Who carries it now?	Who could grow into it?	My next step
Intercessor			
Truth-teller			
Celebrator			
Stayer			

Then flip it: whose corner are you carrying? Write one name and one way you'll show up for them this week.

> CHAPTER REVIEW
>
> **Connection Point:** God didn't give you everything, because He wanted to give you somebody.
>
> **Reflection Questions**
>
> - Who knows the real me, not the public version?
> - Which corners of my mat are empty right now?
> - Have I confused boundaries with walls? Where has hurt or pride convinced me I'm better off alone?

CHAPTER 2

Who Sent You?

A THEOLOGY OF DISCERNMENT · CHAPTER 2 OF 7

"The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul… And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David." — 1 Samuel 18:1, 4 (KJV)

Most of us choose relationships based on chemistry, charisma, shared interests, convenience, or familiarity. In other words, we go by vibes. None of those things are wrong. But none of them answer the most important question you can ask about a person in your life: *Why are they here?*

God doesn't only direct places. He directs people. When He wanted to establish David, He sent Jonathan. When He wanted Moses sustained, He sent Aaron and Hur. When He wanted Saul of Tarsus restored, He sent a disciple named Ananias. **God frequently hides provision inside people**, which makes relational discernment a form of spiritual discernment.

Here are four kinds of people God sends:

Type	Biblical picture	What they're for	The mistake we make
Assigned	Jonathan and David	Sent to support a specific calling or level	Treating them casually
Seasonal	Abram and Lot	Real and valuable for one chapter	Calling the ending a betrayal
Instructional	Saul and David	Teaching you, by good or bad example	Staying in a class you should have graduated from
Connector	Barnabas and Paul	Opening a door you couldn't open alone	Expecting them to become covenant

Assigned people

Jonathan enters David's story right after Goliath, as David is moving from the sheep fields into the palace. That timing matters. God frequently sends people at moments of transition. David didn't need Jonathan in Bethlehem. In Saul's court, he needed someone who understood royalty, palace politics, and Saul himself.

What makes Jonathan extraordinary is what he had to lose. He was the king's son, and David's rise threatened Jonathan's future. Yet Jonathan takes off his robe, armor, sword, and bow and gives them to David. He's effectively saying, "What God is doing in you does not threaten what God is doing in me." **Covenant doesn't need you to shrink so the other person can feel big.**

Assigned people tend to share four marks:

1. **They see something in you early.** Jonathan recognized David's calling before Saul did.
2. **They protect your future, not just your feelings.** They'll say something uncomfortable because they can see where you're headed.
3. **They don't exploit proximity.** They can be close without using your access to advance themselves.
4. **They make you more yourself.** If staying connected constantly requires compromising your convictions, calling, or peace, question the assignment.

Seasonal people

"And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together" (Genesis 13:6). Abram and Lot had real history, but eventually their relationship ran out of room. The problem wasn't hatred. It was capacity. Sometimes we label as betrayal what is actually just development.

Notice that Abram separates *before* the relationship turns toxic: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee… for we be brethren" (Genesis 13:8). Some friendships would be remembered fondly today if the people involved had recognized when the season changed. **Some relationships don't need a funeral. They need a new format.** We may not be best friends anymore, but we can still honor each other.

And temporary isn't the same as fake. Some people stay thirty years, some thirty months, some thirty days. If they fulfilled God's purpose in your life, the relationship mattered.

Instructional people

Jonathan taught David covenant. Saul taught David caution. One loved David and one feared him, but both shaped the king he became.

Some people teach you by positive example. Others teach you by negative example: *I will never lead from insecurity. I will never use people.* Some of your most important teachers never meant to teach you anything. You learned because you survived them.

If you went through a painful relationship, collect the lesson. What did I miss? What warning signs did I ignore? What boundary should I set earlier next time? You can forgive someone and still keep the lesson. Forgiveness doesn't require amnesia.

Connectors

"But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles" (Acts 9:27). Paul had calling, revelation, and a testimony, but no credibility. Barnabas brought him into a room he couldn't enter alone. **Barnabas wasn't Paul's destination. He was Paul's bridge.**

If you expect a connector to become a covenant friend, you'll almost always feel let down. Maybe their whole assignment was "Bring him to the apostles." Once they did that, they were finished, and that isn't failure. It's faithfulness.

Discernment isn't labeling

These categories aren't for sorting people into boxes and dismissing them. They're for releasing people from being everything. Most relational pain comes from a category mismatch: expecting a seasonal friend to stay forever, or a connector to become covenant.

So when someone enters your life, don't only ask, "Do I like them?" Ask, "God, who sent them, and why?" Then turn it around. You are someone's Jonathan, Lot, lesson, or Barnabas.

The Working Word: *Qashar* (Knit)

First Samuel 18:1 says Jonathan's soul was "knit" to David's. The Hebrew verb is *qashar*: to bind, to tie together, to fasten so tightly that two things move as one.

Here's what's striking: the same root is used for a conspiracy. When Absalom turned on his father, Scripture says "Ahithophel is among the conspirators" (2 Samuel 15:31), the *qosherim*, the ones bound together. The binding is the same. What differs is the purpose. That's why discernment matters. Every close bond is tying you to something. The question is what.

Disconnected vs. Connected

	Disconnected	Connected
Chooses people by	Chemistry and convenience	Discernment and assignment
When a season ends	Calls it betrayal	Honors it and adjusts the format
After a painful relationship	Builds a wall	Collects the lesson
Expects every friend to	Be everything	Be what they were sent to be
Responds to others' rise	Competes	Celebrates, like Jonathan

Common Mistakes

- **Rewriting the past.** When a relationship changes, we decide it was never real. Something can be temporary and still authentic.
- **Holding a connector hostage.** Resenting someone because they opened a door and didn't stay misses what they were sent to do.
- **Mistaking intensity for assignment.** Fast closeness can feel like destiny. Assigned people prove themselves over time, not in a week.

Where It Shows Up

- **At home:** Family members can play different roles in different seasons. A parent may be instructional at 15 and a confidant at 35.
- **With friends:** Old friendships often need a new format, not an ending.
- **At work or church:** Mentors and connectors open doors. Thank them, even when the relationship doesn't continue.

Tool: The Relationship Map

List the people who have shaped the last five years of your life. Mark each one's type and what they were sent to do.

Name	Type	What they were sent to do	How I'll honor it

Look for any name where you've been expecting more than the role. That's where disappointment usually comes from.

CHAPTER REVIEW

Connection Point: Stop asking every person to be everything, and start asking God why He sent them.

Reflection Questions

- At the major transitions in my life, who did God send?
- Is there a relationship I've called a betrayal that may simply have been a season ending?
- Which of the four roles am I playing in someone else's life right now?

PART TWO

DISCERNING YOUR CIRCLE

"But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." — John 2:24 (KJV)

In this part: Chapter 3, Who's in Your Boat? · Chapter 4, People Skills Are Spiritual Skills

You've accepted that you need people. Now comes the wisdom part. Jesus loved everybody, but everybody didn't get the same access. These two chapters help you place people wisely, and then turn the mirror around so you become better at people yourself.

CHAPTER 3

Who's in Your Boat?

A THEOLOGY OF PROXIMITY · CHAPTER 3 OF 7

"Let us pass over unto the other side... And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full." — Mark 4:35–37 (KJV)

We tend to assume that if someone is a good person, they're automatically the right person for every area of our lives. That assumption causes a lot of damage.

Jesus didn't relate to everyone the same way. He had the crowds, the seventy, the twelve, the three (Peter, James, and John), and John, who leaned on His chest at the Last Supper. **Jesus loved everybody. Everybody did not have equal access.**

You can love someone and not put them in your boat. You can forgive someone and not put them in your boat. Here's the principle: **every connection has a context.** The people closest to your assignment must have the capacity to survive what comes with it.

Destination comes first

Before there's a cloud in the sky, Jesus announces, "Let us pass over unto the other side." The storm doesn't determine the destination. The word determined the destination before the storm showed up.

And the disciples aren't in this storm because they disobeyed. They're in it because they got in the boat with Jesus. Connection can give you access to someone's favor. It can also expose you to their fight.

Most of us choose relationships first and hope God blesses wherever they take us. Reverse the order. Ask, "Where is God taking me?" Then ask, "Who has the capacity to go there with me?"

Discernment isn't always about identifying someone as bad. Sometimes it identifies someone as misplaced. They may just belong on a different shore.

The other little ships

Mark adds a small detail: "There were also with him other little ships" (verse 36). Everyone heading in the same direction doesn't have to be in the same boat. Some people can be *with* you without being *close* to you. They support the vision without sitting in the inner circle, and that's healthy.

Proximity creates participation

The disciples didn't create the storm. They were connected to someone whose journey led through it. Whoever you connect yourself to, you eventually participate in what's attached to them: their patterns, decisions, battles, and direction.

Paul warned Timothy not to lay hands on anyone too quickly, lest he become "partaker of other men's sins" (1 Timothy 5:22). Lot's connection to Abram exposed him to blessing. His later connection to Sodom exposed his family to destruction.

What proximity can import	What proximity can impart
Anxiety that wasn't originally yours	Faith you didn't have on your own
Drama and conflict	Discipline and consistency
Cynicism	Vision and ambition
Compromise that slowly became normal	Higher standards and new opportunities

Connection is never neutral.

Pressure reveals

You don't really know who's in your boat while the water is calm. Let money get tight, let someone get corrected, let someone else get promoted. Pressure doesn't usually change people. It reveals what was already there.

Look at the disciples' words: "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Jesus was asleep, and they concluded He didn't care. Nothing about Him had changed, but fear assigned a motive to His silence.

Some people read everything you do through their wounds. You didn't reject them, but rejection is their lens. Eventually you realize you're relating to everything that happened to them before they met you. That doesn't mean you discard wounded people. It means **unhealed wounds make inaccurate interpreters**, and that includes your own.

Who's in the boat matters more than what's around it

The disciples were consumed by the storm around the boat while the Savior slept inside it. The storm has wind, but the boat has Jesus. You can survive an imperfect crew if the right Person is aboard.

And when Jesus said, "Peace, be still," the same disciples who doubted His care asked, "What manner of man is this?" The storm gave them a revelation they couldn't have gotten on shore. **Shared storms create relational equity.** There's a difference between people who heard your testimony and people who were in the boat.

The Working Word: *Phimoō* (Be Still)

When Jesus speaks to the sea in Mark 4:39, "Peace, be still," the second command is the Greek *phimoō*. It literally means to muzzle. It's the word Paul uses for muzzling an ox (1 Corinthians 9:9), and the word Jesus uses when He tells an unclean spirit to "hold thy peace" (Mark 1:25).

Watch what that means. Jesus doesn't negotiate with the storm. He muzzles it. The disciples' boat was full of water and fear, but it was also carrying the One with authority to shut the storm's mouth. That's why the most important question about your boat is who's in it.

Disconnected vs. Connected

	Disconnected	Connected
Chooses the circle by	Who's available	Where God is taking them
Treats boundaries as	Unloving	How Jesus loved
When someone is outgrown	Demonizes them	Lets them be on another shore
In a storm	Assigns motives	Remembers who's aboard
Values most	What's around the boat	Who's in it

Common Mistakes

- **Equal access for everyone.** Loving everybody doesn't mean everyone gets a seat in the inner circle.
- **Ignoring what you've imported.** Some of your anxiety, cynicism, or compromise came through proximity. Name it.
- **Judging people in calm water.** Don't hand someone deep trust until you've seen how they handle pressure.

Where It Shows Up

- **At home:** Family can be loved fully and still not be in every decision.
- **With friends:** Notice who you become after time with each person. That's proximity at work.
- **At work or church:** Before a big step, ask who on your team has the capacity for what it will bring.

Tool: The Five Circles

Jesus related to people in five circles. Prayerfully write names in each. Don't write anyone off. The goal is placement, not punishment.

Circle	Who it is	Names
The Crowd	People you know and love from a distance	
The Seventy	People who share the mission	
The Twelve	People you do life with regularly	
The Three	People who see you in the garden	
The One	The person who knows you best	

Circle any name that's in the wrong place. What's one adjustment you'll make this month?

> CHAPTER REVIEW
>
> **Connection Point:** Everybody can be loved, but not everybody belongs in your boat.
>
> **Reflection Questions**
>
> - Where is God taking me in this season, and who has the capacity to go there with me?
> - What have I imported through proximity, good or bad?
> - Is there a wound that has become my lens for interpreting others?

CHAPTER 4

People Skills Are Spiritual Skills

A THEOLOGY OF RELATIONAL MATURITY · CHAPTER 4 OF 7

"Let love be without dissimulation… Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another… If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." — Romans 12:9–10, 18 (KJV)

Here's something I've learned the hard way: **being spiritual does not automatically make you relationally healthy.**

You can pray with power and still not know how to communicate. You can quote Scripture fluently and be terrible at apologizing. You can sense when someone else "has a spirit" and completely miss that you have an attitude. Some of what we call spiritual warfare isn't warfare at all. It's a lack of people skills.

When Jesus named the greatest commandment, He gave two, and both are relational: love God, love your neighbor. Spiritual maturity is revealed in how we relate to people. Here are eight skills that make relationships work. None require a title. All require humility.

1. Stop expecting you from other people

You reply to texts in three minutes; they reply in three days. You remember birthdays; they barely remember their own. And you conclude they don't care. Maybe. Or maybe they just aren't you.

Difference is not automatically deficiency. Before you get offended, ask: *Did they violate a principle, or my preference?* And stop making people take tests they don't know they're taking. Communicate.

2. Give every relationship a category

Everybody matters, but everybody doesn't belong everywhere. Often the problem isn't the person. It's their placement.

Level	Category	Description
1	Acquaintances	We can talk and laugh. You don't need my history.
2	Associates	We're connected through work, church, or community. That doesn't make us friends.
3	Friends	We share life, with mutual care and investment.
4	Confidants	I trust you with vulnerability because you've proven discretion.
5	Covenant	We've been tested by time, disagreement, success, and struggle, and we're still here.

Many of us give Level 5 access to a Level 1 relationship. You met on Tuesday, and by Thursday you said, "I've never told anyone this." That's why everyone knows now. **Time reveals what chemistry conceals.**

3. Distinguish a bad moment from a bad pattern

They forgot to call: red flag. They corrected you: narcissist. They said no: "God is exposing people." Maybe God is exposing your inability to hear no.

Ask: *Is this an incident or a pattern?* Anyone can have a bad day. Repeated dishonesty, disrespect, or manipulation is different. **Grace covers mistakes. Wisdom recognizes patterns.**

4. Stop calling avoidance "peace"

Biblical peace often requires participation. In Matthew 18, Jesus doesn't say to post something vague and wait for them to figure it out. He says go to them.

A simple rule: **clarify before you crucify.** "What did you mean by that?" "Here's how I took it." "Can we talk about this?" One honest conversation can dissolve an offense you've been feeding for weeks.

5. Know when not to explain

Jesus also taught boundaries (Matthew 7:6). Ask: *Is this person seeking understanding or ammunition?* If they consistently twist your words, stop auditioning your truth before someone committed to misunderstanding it. Maturity knows when to stop having the same conversation.

6. Don't confuse access with ownership

Your friend can have other friends. Your pastor can talk to other members. Someone can love you and not invite you everywhere. Possessiveness isn't proof of love; it's often evidence of insecurity. Healthy relationships say, "I value what God has allowed us to share."

7. Let relationships change form

If you're upset because "you used to call me every day," remember: you were nineteen. Neither of you had a job, a mortgage, or kids. A relationship can change form without losing value. Give it room to grow up.

8. Become the person you're praying to find

Set everyone else aside and ask: *Would I want me in my boat?* Am I trustworthy? Can I be corrected? Can I keep a confidence? Can someone share good news without me making it about me? Can I hear "no" without an attitude?

Charisma can start a relationship, but character sustains it.

Jesus, the model

John 2:24 says Jesus "did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." He loved without granting indiscriminate access. On the same night, Peter denied Him and Judas betrayed Him. Jesus restored Peter and let Judas go. Peter's was a failure of courage. Judas's was the end of a pattern. That's relational discernment.

The Working Word: *Anypokritos* (Without Hypocrisy)

"Let love be without dissimulation" (Romans 12:9) translates the Greek *anypokritos*: un-hypocritical. A *hypokritēs* was a stage actor, someone speaking from behind a mask.

So Paul's first instruction about relationships is: take off the mask. Love that performs can impress people for a while, but it can't sustain them. Every skill in this chapter rests on this one. People can only connect with the real you.

Disconnected vs. Connected

	Disconnected	Connected
When someone is different	Takes offense	Asks: principle or preference?
Gives access based on	Chemistry	Proven trust
After one bad moment	Ends the relationship	Looks for a pattern first
When something bothers them	Hints, posts, or vents	Clarifies before crucifying
Measures maturity by	How spiritual they seem	How well they treat people

Common Mistakes

- **Using spiritual language to avoid personal growth.** "That's just a spirit" can be a way to avoid an honest look in the mirror.
- **Oversharing early.** Vulnerability is healthy. Handing your whole story to someone who hasn't proven discretion is not.
- **Treating every disagreement as disrespect.** Healthy people can disagree with you and still love you.

Where It Shows Up

- **At home:** Most family conflict is principle-versus-preference confusion. Name which one it is.
- **With friends:** Tell people how to love you well. Your friends aren't prophets.
- **At work or church:** Clarify before you crucify, especially in email and group chats.

Tool: The Access Audit

Think about your closest relationships (no names yet) and answer honestly:

1. Who makes me stronger spiritually, emotionally, and practically?
2. Who can tell me the truth without losing access to me?
3. Who do I need to recover from after spending time with them?
4. Who has earned more access, and who have I given access they haven't earned?
5. What am I becoming because of the people closest to me?

Now turn every question around and answer it about yourself. Do people need to recover after time with *me*?

> CHAPTER REVIEW
>
> **Connection Point:** Lord, don't just send me better people. Make me better at people.
>
> **Reflection Questions**
>
> - Think of a recent offense. Was it a principle or a preference?
> - Is there a pattern in one of my relationships that I've been calling "grace"?
> - Which question in Skill 8 convicts me most?

PART THREE

WORTH BEING CONNECTED TO

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." — Galatians 6:2 (KJV)

In this part: Chapter 5, You're Getting on My Nerves · Chapter 6, Match My Energy? · Chapter 7, You Won't Have to Do This by Yourself

Here's where most relationship advice stops, and where most relationships break down. You can know you need people and place them wisely, but real connection gets tested in friction, in hurt, and in heavy seasons. These final three chapters are about staying, responding well, and letting yourself be helped.

CHAPTER 5

You're Getting on My Nerves

A THEOLOGY OF FRICTION · CHAPTER 5 OF 7

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." — Colossians 3:12–13 (KJV)

Everybody loves community until community requires community.

We pray, "Lord, send me my people." God sends people. Six months later we pray, "Lord, get these people away from me." You asked for community. This is what community looks like.

So here's the principle: **healthy relationships aren't relationships where nobody gets on your nerves. They're relationships mature enough to survive the fact that somebody eventually will.** Some relationships aren't struggling because they're unhealthy. They're struggling because they're real.

Scripture assumes friction

Paul tells the Colossians to put on mercy, humility, and longsuffering, and to forbear and forgive. Those instructions assume there will be things to endure and forgive.

Moses and Aaron clashed. Paul and Barnabas split. Paul confronted Peter. The disciples argued about who was greatest. Paul had to plead with Euodia and Syntyche to get along. **The presence of friction doesn't mean the absence of God.**

Friction is how sharpening works

"Iron sharpeneth iron" (Proverbs 27:17) sounds great on a T-shirt. But iron sharpening iron means friction, pressure, and sparks. You can't be sharpened without something touching your edges.

You think you're patient until you live with someone. You think you're humble until you're corrected. You think you're secure until someone in your field gets promoted ahead of you. Suddenly you're praying, "Lord, fix them," and God is answering, "I'm working on you."

That's the **mirror principle**: relationships aren't just windows that show us other people. They're mirrors that show us ourselves. When someone irritates you, ask, "Why does this bother me *this much*?" Some people are sandpaper in the hand of God.

Healthy people still disappoint

People will disappoint you: spouses, friends, pastors, parents, churches. And you will disappoint people too.

We judge ourselves by our intentions and everybody else by their actions. When we fail, it's "I didn't mean it that way." When they fail, "They knew exactly what they were doing." Forgiveness is built into Christianity because disappointment is built into relationships.

Imperfection is not injury

Forbearance does *not* mean tolerating abuse. Sort what's happening:

Category	Examples	What it calls for
Preference	Quieter than you, always late, texts differently	Acceptance
Imperfection	Forgot, had a bad day, honest mistake	Grace
Offense	Something genuinely hurt	A conversation and forgiveness
Pattern	Repeated dishonesty, disrespect, manipulation	Intervention and boundaries
Harm	Abuse, threats, coercion, danger	Protection, help, and distance

Harm is not a forbearance issue. If you're in danger, the faithful response is to get safe and get help.

Not every offense needs a meeting

"It is his glory to pass over a transgression" (Proverbs 19:11). Some situations need a Matthew 18 conversation. Some need counseling. Some just need a nap and a meal.

Ask: *Does this need resolution, or do I need regulation?* And **stop assigning malicious motives to ambiguous moments.** Maybe they didn't see you on Sunday. Maybe they were trying to remember whether they turned off the stove.

Conflict isn't incompatibility

Sometimes you just had an argument. You don't need a prophetic word. You need an apology. **The strength of a relationship isn't only its ability to avoid rupture, but its capacity for repair.** Can I correct you without losing you? Can you confront me without becoming my enemy?

Stop keeping receipts

Love "thinketh no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5), which many translations render as love "keeps no record of wrongs." Some people have forgiven you, with screenshots, dates, and exhibits. If every disagreement reopens every old one, you're arguing about Tuesday plus 2019 plus Thanksgiving. Forgiveness means you stop using forgiven information as a weapon.

Dangerous or difficult?

We've become experts at relational exits and novices at relational endurance. So ask: *Is this relationship dangerous, or is it difficult?* Don't stay in danger because someone preached endurance. Don't abandon every difficult relationship because someone preached boundaries.

Maybe God isn't trying to get them out of your life. Maybe He's using them to get something out of you.

The Working Word: *Anechomai* (Forbear)

"Forbearing one another" (Colossians 3:13) translates the Greek *anechomai*: to hold up, to bear with, to endure. It's built from *ana* (up) and *echō* (to hold).

That's the picture: forbearance is holding yourself up under someone else's weight for a while, the way you'd steady a friend who stumbles. It isn't pretending nothing happened. It's choosing not to drop the relationship the moment it gets heavy, which is exactly what Christ does for us.

Disconnected vs. Connected

	Disconnected	Connected
Sees friction as	Proof it's wrong	Proof it's real
When irritated, asks	"What's wrong with them?"	"What's this exposing in me?"
Judges others by	Their actions	The same grace they want
After forgiving	Keeps receipts	Lets it go
Measures health by	No conflict	Capacity for repair

Common Mistakes

- **Calling everything toxic.** Most friction is preference or imperfection, not harm.
- **Calling harm "forbearance."** Abuse is never something to quietly endure.

- **Confronting while dysregulated.** Calm down first. Then decide whether it needs a conversation.

Where It Shows Up

- **At home:** Most household friction is preference. Name it as such and laugh about it.
- **With friends:** A friendship that survives a rupture and repairs often comes out stronger.
- **At work or church:** Teams that can disagree without recruiting sides get more done.

Tool: The Friction Sorter

List three things currently getting on your nerves. Sort each honestly, then decide your response.

What's happening	Category	What it's exposing in me	My response

If anything lands in Harm, talk to a pastor, counselor, or trusted person this week.

> CHAPTER REVIEW
>
> **Connection Point:** Maybe God isn't trying to get them out of your life. Maybe He's using them to get something out of you.
>
> **Reflection Questions**
>
> - Who's getting on my nerves right now, and what might that reveal about me?
> - Am I keeping receipts on someone I say I've forgiven?
> - Is there a relationship I've labeled dangerous that's really difficult, or the reverse?

CHAPTER 6

Match My Energy?

A THEOLOGY OF RESPONSE · CHAPTER 6 OF 7

"Recompense to no man evil for evil... If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men... Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." — Romans 12:17–18, 21 (KJV)

One of the most popular relational philosophies of our time fits in three words: *Match their energy.* You stop calling me, I stop calling you. You take three hours to text back, so I set a timer for four hours and twelve minutes, because I refuse to look desperate.

But the kingdom asks a harder question: *Why should somebody else's dysfunction get to decide my disposition?* If you can make me petty because you're petty, who's really in control of my life?

Christian maturity means I don't have to become what you became in order to respond to what you did. The world says, "Match their energy." Jesus says, "Maintain your identity."

Reciprocity vs. retaliation

Healthy relationships *should* include reciprocity. Both people should care and show up. The problem is mirroring: "Whatever you give me, I'll give right back." If I'm committed to mirroring you, I've outsourced my character to your behavior.

That's why Paul says, "Recompense to no man evil for evil." The moment your evil produces evil in me, your evil has won. **Evil wins when it reproduces itself in you.**

Thermometer or thermostat?

A thermometer reflects its environment. They're cold, so I'm cold. They unfollow me, so I block them. A thermostat sets the environment: my kindness isn't based on yours, and my integrity isn't a reaction to you.

Who can walk into a room and change your mood? Who can send one text and ruin your day? If someone can consistently set your temperature without your permission, you've handed them too much authority.

Reacting puts them in charge

"Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me" (Proverbs 24:29). Listen to reactive language: *I stopped speaking because they stopped. I didn't show up because they didn't show up for me.* "Because they" means they're making your decisions. You removed them from your phone, but not from your emotional control panel.

The goal isn't just distance. It's freedom: **"What you did may inform my wisdom, but it will not determine my character."**

When their dysfunction recruits yours

You were doing so well, walking in the fruit of the Spirit. Then they texted one letter: "K." And something rose up in you from three generations back.

Dysfunction recruits dysfunction. Ask: *What version of me does this person consistently activate?* Then ask the more important question: **"Why is this still in me, available to be brought out?"** That moves you from blame to growth.

Decline some invitations

"As much as lieth in you" means handle your part. Not every comment needs a reply. A vague post isn't a subpoena. Silence isn't always weakness; sometimes it's evidence you no longer need to win every exchange. Jesus didn't answer every accusation made against Him.

And "if it be possible" admits that some relationships won't reconcile. **You're responsible for your obedience, not their response.** Sometimes closure isn't something they give you. It's a decision you make: *I've done what righteousness required, and I release what I can't control.*

Kindness is not access

"Don't match their energy" doesn't mean "keep letting people mistreat you." You can refuse retaliation and still set boundaries. You can forgive and reduce access. You can pray for someone and not vacation with them.

I don't have to punish you to protect myself. Boundaries determine access. Character determines response.

Boundary	Revenge
Protects health	Causes pain
"This keeps me well."	"I want them to know how it feels."
Motivated by wisdom	Motivated by injury

From the outside, the two can look identical. God examines the heart.

What "heaping coals" means

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him… for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Romans 12:20, quoting Proverbs 25:21–22). This isn't a strategy to be extra nice so it burns them up inside. That's still revenge. The point is to refuse to let hostility set your ethics. You don't do good because they deserve it. You do good because that's who you're becoming.

Jesus didn't match energy

They cursed Him, and He didn't curse back. They crucified Him, and He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The cross is what happens when love refuses to let hatred dictate its character. He didn't match their energy. He revealed His identity.

Three levels of maturity

1. **Reaction:** "You did it, so I did it."
2. **Restraint:** "I wanted to, but I didn't."
3. **Redemptive response:** "I'll respond in a way that reflects Christ and could produce something better."

The Working Word: *Nikaō* (Overcome)

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" uses the Greek *nikaō* twice. It means to conquer, to win the victory. It shares a root with *nikē*, the word for victory itself.

Paul frames every hurtful encounter as a contest with only two outcomes: either evil wins by reproducing itself in you, or you win by answering it with good. There's no neutral option. Every response is either a defeat or a victory.

Disconnected vs. Connected

	Disconnected	Connected
Lets others set	Their temperature	Nothing; they set their own
Explains choices with	"Because they…"	"Because I am…"
Uses boundaries to	Punish	Protect
Waits for	Closure from the other person	Peace from God
Measures strength by	Clapping back	Self-control

Common Mistakes

- **Calling revenge a boundary.** If the goal is for them to feel what you felt, it isn't a boundary.
- **Confusing restraint with weakness.** Self-control is the capacity to do something and the maturity not to.
- **Making permanent decisions from temporary emotions.** Some texts read completely differently after a night's sleep.

Where It Shows Up

- **At home:** One person's mood shouldn't set the whole house's temperature.
- **With friends:** Adjust access without dropping your character.
- **At work or church:** Not every email, post, or rumor needs a response.

Tool: The Response Check

The next time you want to match someone's energy, wait 24 hours if you can, then walk through these:

☐ **What actually happened?** Not what I assume or heard.

☐ **What am I feeling?** Name it before acting from it.

☐ **What is this touching?** Today, or something older?

☐ **What response reflects my values?** Not what they deserve, but who I want to be.

☐ **Does this call for grace, a conversation, or a boundary?**

CHAPTER REVIEW

Connection Point: I don't match energy. I maintain identity.

Reflection Questions

- Who currently sets my emotional temperature, and how did they get that power?
- Finish honestly: "I stopped _____ because they _____." What does it reveal?
- Is there a "boundary" in my life that's really punishment?

CHAPTER 7

You Won't Have to Do This by Yourself

A THEOLOGY OF SUPPORT · CHAPTER 7 OF 7

"But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands... and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." — Exodus 17:12 (KJV)

After a whole book about discerning people, someone has reached a reasonable-sounding conclusion: "This is exactly why I don't deal with people." Congratulations. Your circle isn't small anymore; it's a period. Just you, Jesus, and the delivery apps.

We can laugh, but discernment can quietly turn into isolation. **The purpose of discernment isn't to eliminate relationships. It's to improve them.** So let's end by confronting the most celebrated lie of our culture: "I don't need anybody."

Heavy hands

Israel is at war with Amalek. Joshua leads the fight in the valley. Moses stands on the hill with the rod of God. When his hands are raised, Israel prevails. When they drop, Amalek prevails.

Then verse 12: "But Moses' hands were heavy." This is the man who confronted Pharaoh and parted the Red Sea. His hands still got heavy.

Anointed people get tired. So do leaders, parents, caregivers, and everyone others depend on. Getting tired doesn't mean something is wrong with you. Sometimes heavy hands are simply evidence that you've been holding something for a long time.

And when Moses' hands got heavy, God didn't give him new hands. He sent Aaron and Hur. **Sometimes God's answer to heavy hands is helping hands.**

Anointed is not the same as self-sufficient

God calling you doesn't mean God called you to do it alone. In fact, the size of your assignment often determines how much help you need.

- **Anointing** says, "God is with me."

- **Self-sufficiency** says, "I don't need anybody else."

Many of us have spiritualized independence. We call isolation "protecting my peace," refusing help "being strong," and our inability to delegate "nobody can do it like me." The man who parted the sea couldn't hold his arms up all day. **Just because you can carry it doesn't mean you were called to carry it alone.**

Different roles, one victory

Moses is on the mountain. Joshua is in the valley. Aaron and Hur are on either side. If Joshua leaves the battle to stand beside Moses, Israel loses. If Aaron would rather have a sword than hold an arm, Israel loses. **I don't have to do your job to be important.**

So stop requiring everyone to love you the same way. One person encourages you; another challenges you. One prays; another opens doors. Don't reject Aaron because he isn't Joshua. Everyone connected to you doesn't get the same access, because they don't have the same assignment.

People who can handle your weight

Aaron and Hur didn't just stand near Moses. They touched the heavy place. Some people are attracted to what's *on* you. God will send people with capacity for what you're *carrying*.

- **They don't reach for the rod.** They don't want your seat. They want your arms to stay up.
- **They see weakness and still honor you.** Everybody admired Moses from the valley. Aaron and Hur saw his hands shake, and they didn't expose it. They held it up.
- **They give you somewhere to sit.** Before they held his hands, "they took a stone, and put it under him." Some people are sent into your life as resting places.

The assignment isn't shrinking. The help is growing.

The miracle wasn't that Moses stopped being tired. His weakness simply stopped determining the outcome, because now he had help. God may not shrink the assignment; He may increase the assistance. **The assignment isn't getting smaller. The help is getting stronger.**

And Moses' hands were personal, but their position affected everyone. Aaron and Hur weren't just helping Moses. They were helping all of Israel. When you strengthen a mother, you help her children. When you pray for a leader, you strengthen everyone they lead. You never know how many people are winning because you helped someone keep their hands up.

Help is on the hill

If you're tired of always being the strong one, help is on the hill. God is sending Aarons and Hurs: not people you have to chase or convince to care, but people who know what to do when your hands get heavy. Moses finished that day with his hands up. So can you.

The Working Word: *Emunah* (Steady)

"His hands were steady until the going down of the sun." The Hebrew word for steady is *emunah*. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, it's usually translated "faithfulness." It comes from the same root as *amen*: firm, established, something you can lean your weight on.

Think about that. Moses' hands became *faithful* only once other people held them up. Faithfulness in Scripture is rarely a solo act. Sometimes the most faithful thing you can do is let someone help you stay steady.

Disconnected vs. Connected

	Disconnected	Connected
Sees tiredness as	Failure	Evidence of what they've carried
Calls refusing help	Strength	Pride
Expects everyone to	Play the same role	Play their own role
Wants from others	Their admiration	Their honesty and support
Answers heavy seasons by	Quitting or shrinking	Receiving help

Common Mistakes

- **Waiting until you collapse to ask.** Aaron and Hur came at the first sign of heavy hands, not after the battle was lost.
- **Rejecting help that looks different.** The help God sends may not look like what you pictured.
- **Using discernment as a wall.** After everything this book teaches, the answer is still: let people in.

Where It Shows Up

- **At home:** Parents and caregivers need Aarons and Hurs too. Ask for specific help.
- **With friends:** Be a stone: someone people can rest around without performing.
- **At work or church:** Delegation isn't weakness. It's how Israel won.

Tool: The Aaron and Hur Inventory

Name what's heavy, who could help, and the specific ask you'll make.

What's heavy right now	Who could help hold it	My specific ask	By when

Then flip it: whose arms are shaking around you? Write one name and how you'll help hold them up this week.

CHAPTER REVIEW

Connection Point: The assignment isn't getting smaller. The help is getting stronger.

Reflection Questions

- Where are my hands heavy right now?
- Where have I spiritualized independence, calling it strength or excellence?
- Who are the stones in my life, people I can rest around?

CONCLUSION

Becoming Someone Worth Being Connected To

We started with a simple truth: God designed you to need what He placed in other people. Everything since has been about living that truth wisely.

If this book has done its work, you won't walk away with a longer list of people to cut off. You'll walk away knowing who to hold close, who to release with honor, who to forgive, who to forbear, and who to carry.

And you'll walk away with a mirror. The question underneath every chapter was never only "Who are my people?" It was also **"What kind of person am I to my people?"**

The 7 chapters at a glance

Designed for Connection

1. **You Need People.** God didn't give you everything, because He wanted to give you somebody.
2. **Who Sent You?** People are assigned, seasonal, instructional, or connectors.

Discerning Your Circle

3. **Who's in Your Boat?** Everybody can be loved; not everybody gets access.
4. **People Skills Are Spiritual Skills.** Being spiritual doesn't make you good at people.

Becoming Someone Worth Being Connected To

5. **You're Getting on My Nerves.** Friction isn't proof a relationship is wrong.
6. **Match My Energy?** Don't match energy; maintain identity.
7. **You Won't Have to Do This by Yourself.** God's answer to heavy hands is helping hands.

Where to start

Don't try to fix every relationship this month. Pick the chapter where you scored lowest. Work its Tool until it becomes a habit. Then pick the next.

If you're not sure where to begin, start where the book begins. Everything else depends on accepting that you need people.

A closing prayer

Lord, thank You that You never designed me to live alone. Forgive me for the places I've called isolation "peace" and suspicion "discernment." Give me eyes to see who You've sent, and the humility to receive them for what they are. Teach me what to overlook, what to address, what to forgive, and when to step away. Keep my character steady when others change. Send me people who can handle my weight, and make me someone who can handle theirs. In Jesus' name, amen.

> **Connection Point:** Don't just find better people. Become better at people.

NEXT STEPS

Your 30-Day Connection Plan

Inspiration fades. Plans finish. This chapter turns everything you've read into 30 days of focused action, one part of the book at a time.

Before Day 1

- ☐ Take the Connection Scorecard, and ask one trusted person to score you too.
- ☐ Choose a **Connection Partner**, one friend who will walk through this plan with you.
- ☐ Set a weekly 30-minute check-in with your partner for the next four weeks.
- ☐ Pick one relationship you most want to see change by Day 30.

The 30 days

Week	Focus	Key actions	Tools to use
1	Chapters 1–2: Take inventory	Name who's carrying each corner. Map who God has sent and why.	Four Corners Audit; Relationship Map
2	Chapters 3–4: Place people wisely	Fill in your five circles. Make one access adjustment, up or down.	Five Circles; Access Audit
3	Chapters 5–6: Repair and respond	Sort one point of friction. Have one "clarify before you crucify" conversation.	Friction Sorter; Response Check
4	Chapter 7: Let people in	Make one specific ask for help. Hold up someone else's arms.	Aaron and Hur Inventory

Your weekly check-in

Keep it to 30 minutes, and keep it the same every week:

1. **Pray (5 minutes).** For the people God is sending, and the ones you're sent to.
2. **Report (10 minutes).** What did I try last week? What happened?
3. **Discuss (10 minutes).** The current chapter's Reflection Questions.
4. **Commit (5 minutes).** One relational step for this week, with a name next to it.

After Day 30

You won't fix every relationship in 30 days, and you're not supposed to. The goal is momentum and a new habit of connection. Retake the Scorecard, celebrate what moved, choose your lowest chapter, and start the next 30 days there.

> **Connection Point:** Connection isn't built in a moment. It's built one conversation, one step, and one relationship at a time.

RESOURCES

Tools for taking your small group, your team, and your whole church through this book.

APPENDIX A

Small Group Guide

Use this guide to study the book with a small group, Bible study, leadership team, or class: one chapter per session, about 60 minutes each. Ask everyone to read the chapter before the meeting.

How each session flows

1. **Open (5 minutes).** Ask the opening question.
2. **Scripture (10 minutes).** Read the key passage aloud and discuss the Working Word.
3. **Discuss (30 minutes).** Work through the chapter's Reflection Questions.
4. **Commit (15 minutes).** Each person names one step for the week, then pray for one another.

The sessions

Session	Read	Key Scripture	Opening question	Practice this week
1	Introduction and Scorecard	Genesis 2:18	Where are you more connected online than in real life?	Take the Scorecard and share one score.
2	Chapter 1	Ecclesiastes 4:9–12; Mark 2:1–12	Who carried your corner in a hard season?	Carry someone else's corner.
3	Chapter 2	1 Samuel 18:1–4; Acts 9:26–28	Who was a "Barnabas" for you?	Thank someone whose season has ended.
4	Chapter 3	Mark 4:35–41	What did your last storm reveal about the people around you?	Complete the Five Circles.
5	Chapter 4	Romans 12:9–18	What's a test someone gave you that you didn't know you were taking?	Clarify before you crucify, once.
6	Chapter 5	Colossians 3:12–14	Who has God used as sandpaper in your life?	Deliberately pass over one minor offense.
7	Chapter 6	Romans 12:17–21	Who sets your temperature?	Use the Response Check before reacting.

Session	Read	Key Scripture	Opening question	Practice this week
8	Chapter 7 and Conclusion	Exodus 17:8–13	Are you more of a Moses, Joshua, Aaron, or Hur?	As a group, become someone's Aaron and Hur.

Tips for leaders

- **Model vulnerability, carefully.** Keep the focus on your own growth rather than other people's faults.
- **Protect confidentiality.** Agree in the first session that what's shared in the group stays in the group.
- **Discourage naming names.** Describe situations without identifying anyone.
- **Watch for harm.** If someone discloses abuse or danger, follow up privately and connect them with appropriate pastoral, professional, or emergency help.
- **Keep turning the mirror.** When the conversation drifts toward "people like that," ask, "What is God showing *us*?"

APPENDIX B

7-Week Sermon Series Outline

Your groups are reading the book. Now take the whole church on the same journey. This series turns each chapter into a congregation-facing message, so the culture of connection grows in the pews and not just in the small group.

Series title: Connected

Series big idea: You were never meant to do life alone.

Week	Sermon title	Text	Big idea	Christ connection
1	You Need People	Ecclesiastes 4:9–12; Mark 2:1–5	God designed you to need what He placed in others.	Jesus doesn't only save us from something. He saves us into a body.
2	Who Sent You?	1 Samuel 18:1–4; Acts 9:26–28	God directs people, not just places.	Jesus is the One who brings us to the Father (John 14:6).
3	Who's in Your Boat?	Mark 4:35–41	Every connection has a context.	The storm can't sink a boat that carries Jesus.
4	People Skills Are Spiritual Skills	Romans 12:9–18	Lord, make me better at people.	Jesus loved everyone without giving everyone equal access (John 2:24).
5	You're Getting on My Nerves	Colossians 3:12–14	Friction isn't proof it's wrong. It may be proof it's real.	"Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."
6	Match My Energy?	Romans 12:17–21	Don't match energy. Maintain identity.	At the cross, love refused to let hatred dictate its character.
7	You Won't Have to Do This by Yourself	Exodus 17:8–13	God's answer to heavy hands is helping hands.	Christ bears our burdens and gives us a body to bear one another's (Galatians 6:2).

Response ideas for each week:

- Week 1: Invite people to write down one name of someone whose corner they'll carry.

- Week 3: "Check the boat" prayer moment: pray over the people closest to each person's assignment.
- Week 5: A reconciliation Sunday: one step toward someone you've been keeping receipts on.
- Week 6: Invite people to name and lay down one "because they" at the altar.
- Week 7: Small group sign-up Sunday, and a prayer of commissioning for every Aaron and Hur in the house.

APPENDIX C

Quote Bank

Shareable lines from every chapter for social media, sermon slides, and promotion. Each one stands on its own.

Introduction

- We've mastered contact without connection.
- Jesus doesn't only save us from something. He saves us into something.
- Put your cousin down. Read it for yourself first.

Chapter 1: You Need People

- God didn't give you everything, because He wanted to give you somebody.
- If no one knows where you're bleeding, no one knows where to apply pressure.
- Your need for people is not a spiritual deficiency. It's a design feature.

Chapter 2: Who Sent You?

- Some relationships don't need a funeral. They need a new format.
- Covenant doesn't need you to shrink so the other person can feel big.
- Barnabas wasn't Paul's destination. He was Paul's bridge.

Chapter 3: Who's in Your Boat?

- Everybody can be loved, but not everybody belongs in your boat.
- Unhealed wounds make inaccurate interpreters.
- Shared storms create relational equity.

Chapter 4: People Skills Are Spiritual Skills

- Lord, don't just send me better people. Make me better at people.
- Time reveals what chemistry conceals.
- Clarify before you crucify.

Chapter 5: You're Getting on My Nerves

- Everybody loves community until community requires community.
- We judge ourselves by our intentions and everybody else by their actions.

- Maybe God isn't trying to get them out of your life. Maybe He's using them to get something out of you.

Chapter 6: Match My Energy?

- I don't match energy. I maintain identity.
- I don't have to punish you to protect myself.
- Evil wins when it reproduces itself in you.

Chapter 7: You Won't Have to Do This by Yourself

- Sometimes God's answer to heavy hands is helping hands.
- Just because you can carry it doesn't mean you were called to carry it alone.
- The assignment isn't getting smaller. The help is getting stronger.

Closing

- Don't just find better people. Become better at people.
- Connection is built one conversation, one step, and one relationship at a time.

About the Author

Mark Moore Jr. is the Senior Pastor of Spirit and Truth Church, a multi-campus congregation of more than 3,600 members with campuses in McDonough, Atlanta, and Marietta, Georgia, and in Detroit, Michigan. His ministry spans preaching, multi-campus leadership, church planting, and leadership development.

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