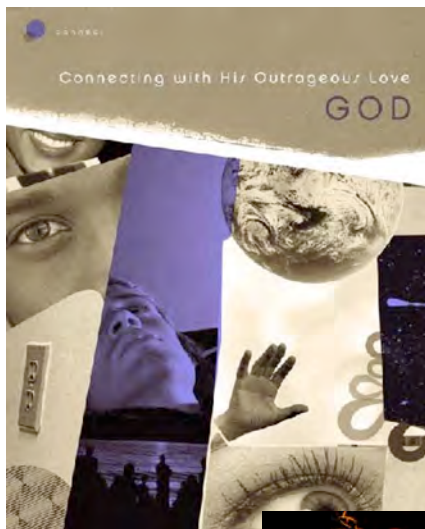


# CONNECT SERIES:

CULTURAL RELEVANCE AND BIBLICAL BASIS FOR NEXT GENERATION RESOURCES

## A GUIDE FOR PASTORS AND MINISTRY LEADERS

AUGUST 2008



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THE NAVIGATORS

Developed by The Navigators National Training Team and published by NavPress  
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## Endorsements

*One of the greatest challenges for every generation is ensuring that the next generation whole-heartedly embraces the life-changing habit of studying the Scriptures. We sense a special calling from God to make certain for the next generation that they are marked by a deep engagement with and obedience to the Scriptures as the Word of God, that they believe the promises of God, and that both personally and in committed communities they seek to know and pursue the purposes of God. The CONNECT Bible studies are a valuable and well-crafted tool that can play a significant part in this process. Drawing on the experience, biblical depth, and creativity of a skilled team of Navigator staff, these studies provide a pathway into the Scriptures for men and women whose learning styles and way of looking at the world are impacted by our increasingly postmodern society. CONNECT addresses both the great themes of Scripture and the pressing life questions of young men and women in ways that will resonate, motivate, and transform.*

**Mike Treneer . . . International President, The Navigators**

*I heartily recommend the CONNECT spiritual transformation series. I especially appreciate the biblically-based themes and Christ-centered approaches to the challenging issues of today. Don't hesitate to use it with your small group!*

**Dr. Walt Baker . . . Dallas Theological Seminary**

*"I'm 22 years old and accepted Christ into my life roughly 4 years ago. However, it hasn't been until recently that I've started significantly growing in my relationship with God, and what really got me started on this path was "GOD: Connecting with His Outrageous Love" Bible study. Right from the beginning, "Pause 1" of chapter 1, I felt God speaking to me in a way that He never has before. Reading Isaiah 43:1-4, and then re-reading it out loud but substituting my name in for the underlined words just hit me like a ton of bricks. Never in my life have I gotten the sense that God was speaking directly to ME, and not to just US (as in, His children). I guess you could say that when I read the verse out loud, it was the first time in my whole life that I related to God on a personal level. Every time I sit down with this study, I can't wait to be challenged with God's Word and new ways of thinking and relating to Him on a personal level. I can only begin to describe the impact it has had on me."*

**Dan Szentesi . . . student**

*I found the "GOD: Connecting with His Outrageous Love" (from the CONNECT Series) to be a great study for people who have never been in a Bible study before as well as those who have been in numerous studies but need to make a heart connection with biblical truths. Most of the students we encounter now have wounds that are greatly impacting their lives. The CONNECT Studies really meet them where they are and does a great job of bringing them into the Father's presence.*

**Debbie Entsminger . . . The Navigators' Collegiate Staff**

*I have been working through the CONNECT Series and I absolutely love it. I feel really challenged. I am pretty sure I could spend a year just thinking about and journeying through one chapter. Never seen anything like it. And it fits so well with where God has been taking me in my journey.*

**Dr. Mark Case . . . The Navigators' Staff Leader, and Ph.D. in Philosophy**

*I highly recommend the CONNECT Series because it exposes students to God's Word, prayer, obedience and other basic concepts that young students need to know to begin the journey of spiritual transformation. It provides a platform for me to help with issues they are going through and to develop rapport between us.*

**Ben Nugent . . . The Navigators' Campus Ministry Leader**

*The CONNECT resources are the best stuff I have seen out there for the 18-35 age generation—and I've seen a lot. They are biblically accurate and appealing. These studies are presented in creative ways that, based on my cultural research, can be well understood by our younger generation. They foster true biblical community that is also missional. I believe the Lord can greatly use these studies to open hearts and minds toward spiritual transformation that can lead to spiritual generations.*

**Dr. Christopher Morton . . . Ph.D. in Theology**

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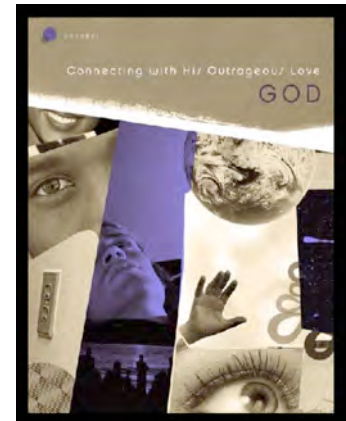
# ONE PAGE OVERVIEW: *CONNECT* Resources

## CHAPTER 1: Cultural Relevance

The *CONNECT* resources were developed primarily for those under age 35. It has been well received by those age 35 and older, as well as across a broad range of spiritual interest and maturity.

In the *CONNECT* resources you will see a focus on:

1. Exalting the **TRIUNE GOD** through worship and deepening intimacy with Him
2. Cultivating **SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION** over a lifetime
3. Embracing our true **IDENTITY**, including our **SEXUALITY**
4. Fostering grace and truth in **COMMUNITY**
5. **KNOWING TRUTH** in the context of Jesus' way and life
6. Using **IMAGES** and **STORY** to open the doors of the heart and mind
7. Integrating **EMOTIONAL** and **INTELLECTUAL REASONING** into **DECISION-MAKING**
8. Understanding sin through the lens of **SHAME** as well as guilt
9. Influencing **FAMILIES, FRIENDS, CHURCH, and SOCIETY**
10. Discovering **MEANING IN LIFE** flowing from God's heart and purposes



## CHAPTER 2: Biblical Basis for Living a Transformed Life

The *CONNECT* resources are designed for **spiritual transformation to help set the DNA for lifelong growth in Jesus**. In the *CONNECT* resources you will see a focus on the:

### GREAT COMMANDMENT: LOVING GOD

- It's as though Jesus were saying, "Even if you miss everything else, please get this one thing loud and clear: an intimate love relationship with God *really is possible for you!*"

### SECOND COMMANDMENT: LOVING OTHERS AS YOURSELF

- We know that we are being transformed when life becomes more about others and less about us. And when in humility we don't think less of ourselves, but we think of ourselves less.
- Loving ourselves asks us to embrace our identity in Christ and address the issues of our fallen condition as we experience healing and move toward our destiny in the Kingdom of God.

### GREAT COMMISSION: MAKING DISCIPLES

- Jesus calls His disciples to give their lives to the mission of discipling others for the Kingdom of God. Dedicated followers of Jesus aren't mass-produced by programs. Rather, they are grown in relational and multi-generational environments where they experience God's transformation integrated into the whole of life.

### CULTURE and NATURE COMMANDS

- God gave two sweeping commands to the human race. The Culture Command ("be fruitful . . . increase in number . . . fill the earth") tasked us to create the families, societies, and cultures of the world, as well as the support systems that bring help and hope. The Nature Command ("rule over every living creature" and "work [the Garden of Eden] and take care of it") tasked us with stewarding nature and the environment.

Go to [www.NavPress.com](http://www.NavPress.com) > Bibles Studies > Connect for this full document and to order the *CONNECT* Series. You may also call NavPress Customer Service toll-free in the USA at: 1-800-366-7788.

# CHAPTER 1:

## Cultural Relevancy

Our American cultural context is becoming increasingly diverse. Just look at the many ways people understand and live their lives, and the vast menu choices of spiritual perspectives, sexual orientations, and decision-making patterns.<sup>1</sup> Many live in urban environments. Of course, not everyone in the United States fits this description. But it does describe most Americans under 35. When we refer to “the next generation,” that’s who we have in mind. Many in this next generation view the “Christian God” as:

harsh            intolerant            exclusive

More and more the Gospel of Jesus doesn’t seem like “good news” to them at all. Or they view God as a vague, loving, universal deity who accepts differing faiths and spiritual practices as long as they are kind.

- The *CONNECT* resources acknowledge that we live in a **world of spiritual pluralism**. By that we mean that Christian distinctives have unfortunately become so blurred that just about any spiritual belief is okay if it “works for you.” For example, Eastern thought and religion influence the way many of us think about fitness, health, and nutrition—even dominating the Saturday morning cartoons. The media exposes us to various unhealthy religious communities. Movies and seminars on many secular topics have overt spiritual (but not godly) themes. The academic world promotes tolerance of non-dominant religions, such as Hinduism or Islam in America but not necessarily Christianity in America. There is pressure on governments, educational systems, and media to accommodate to various religious sensitivities.
- In the United States, **Christianity is also increasingly viewed as a religion of intolerance**. Barna reveals that 93 per cent of the next generation who identify themselves as being outside the Christian faith associate Christians and Christianity with judgmentalism, hypocrisy, anti-homosexuality, and being sheltered, insincere, and too political. They tend to be less critical of the man Jesus Christ than they are of His followers or of the religion they believe He established.<sup>2</sup> This means that Christians **are perceived as harsh toward people themselves**, not just intolerant of sin.
- The *CONNECT* resources **don’t assume that participants have previously been exposed to a biblical view of God**. In fact, they assume that—like the growing majority of young people in America—participants bring varying degrees of negativity and questions into their relationships with God. And how they view Christians deeply impacts how the younger generation views the “Christian” God.<sup>3</sup> Many of those outside of Christianity, especially younger adults:
  - have little trust in the Christian faith
  - are losing respect for the lifestyle of those who follow Christ
  - admit their emotional and intellectual barriers go up when they are around Christians
  - reject Jesus because they feel rejected by Christians



<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for a fuller picture of the U.S. pluralistic contexts.

<sup>2</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity . . . And Why It Matters*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

All of these factors affect their discussions about Christianity and alter their willingness to commit their lives to Jesus.

The *CONNECT* resources also acknowledge that many men and women in the next generation bring deep hurts from family dysfunctions and various types of abuse and neglect into their spiritual journeys.

To address these realities, many of the questions in the *CONNECT* resources invite out into the open:

- doubt about God's relevance or goodness
- disillusionment, distrust, and fear of getting closer to Him
- ambivalence with God
- the source of (often distorted) ideas about God, which usually lead back to relationships with parents and authorities
- the impact of such unresolved personal issues as wounding, shame, abuse, or abandonment



*. . . Christianity's image problem is not merely the perception of young outsiders. Those inside the church see it as well—especially Christians in their twenties and thirties. I was unprepared for the research showing that Mosaic and Buster Christians are skeptical of present-day Christianity . . . We must grasp the idea that young people in our churches are also feeling the heart of these negative perceptions. They are bringing up some of the same challenges, questions, and doubts facing those outside the church.*

—David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons,  
*UnChristian*

The *CONNECT* resources attractively promote interest in and commitment to God by:

- unpacking biblical truth and life's realities with grace, hope, and love so that the kindness of God's offer of salvation is inviting (Romans 2:4).
- urging believers to accept a fair historical critique of our corporate and cultural sins, but then to overcome hostility through love, humility, and the ways of the cross, thus reflecting the true character and heart of God by the way we live our everyday lives.
- exploring many of the biblical metaphors for the God/human relationship, such as potter/clay, master/servant, Lord/disciple, Shepherd/sheep, Friend/friend, etc.
- inviting people to experience God drawing them into His presence and heart with His jealous love.

In other words, the *CONNECT* resources are intentionally designed to meet men and women wherever they are on their spiritual journeys by sensitively exposing possible barriers they might have to experiencing the Lord's love. It is better to get these obstacles out on the table rather than leave them bottled up inside. In this way, the *CONNECT* resources invite us into intimacy and love for God.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix C for useful suggestions on how to lead a *CONNECT* small group.

## In the *CONNECT* Resources you will focus on . . .

. . . becoming like Jesus and growing toward intimacy with Him. Much about the mysterious change process of spiritual transformation is timeless and unchanging. But the changing cultural contexts that we live in deeply impact how souls grow. That's why we who are involved in ministry benefit by "understanding the times"—the prevailing worldview, the cultural and social trends, as well as the assumptions, perceptions, and baggage that people bring into their spiritual journeys (1 Chronicles 12:32). It is heartbreaking to see that so many in the current generation of young people are struggling to survive (much less thrive) in the harsh "desert" of our pluralistic, materialist culture.

So to help us communicate and live out the Gospel in a postmodern context, we have identified ten important themes to consider, all of which are embedded in the *CONNECT* resources.

### 1. Exalting the TRIUNE GOD through worship and deepening intimacy with Him.

*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,  
are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory  
just as from the Lord, the Spirit. –2 Corinthians 3:18 (NASB)*

As we behold God, it changes us! Our pluralistic culture tends to obscure the knowledge of the Triune God as the One and Only True God. In light of so much abuse and abandonment in U.S. families, some people have particular difficulty believing that God really is good or that He is always present with them or that He is for them.

At the heart of spiritual transformation is seeing—or "beholding"—the glory of God and participating in the Lord's reflected glory. God has revealed Himself as the Triune Being, which helps us know Him more deeply. For example, in the Father we might see His power, protection, provision, omniscience, transcendence, and jealous love. In the Son, we might experience His kindness, grace, humility, joy, and sacrificial love. In the Holy Spirit, we can know His presence, comfort, wisdom, conviction, and truth. So it is critical that we learn to exalt our Triune God's three Persons in constant, trusting, dynamic, glorious unity with One Another.



The *CONNECT* resources:

- **explore the three Persons of the Trinity**, especially God's attributes that are important in the spiritual transformation of those in the next generation.
- provide opportunities for people to come to know **God's ever-present heart** more truly and to deepen intimacy with Him in 24/7 worship.
- **recognize abiding in intimacy** ("I in you and you in Me") from John 15 as crucial for transformation.

## 2. Cultivating SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION over a lifetime.

The younger generation can be suspicious of people who claim to know God but who are not being transformed—and, frankly, so was Jesus. So in the *CONNECT* resources:



- **you are invited to have your whole person changed from the inside** . . . not to become more politically conservative or more religiously orthodox . . . but to become more and more like Jesus over a lifetime. That includes your relationships with God, with others, with yourself, and the stewardship of nature.
- **you explore how many of the major doctrines of the Christian faith** can be used by God to renovate your heart as you behold Him.
- **you will discover the power to experience deep change** comes from four sources:
  - 1) through the life, death, resurrection, and continuing prayers of Jesus.
  - 2) by God's Holy Spirit dwelling in us to guide and comfort in the pains and joys of life.
  - 3) through the living Word of God (the Scriptures) speaking truth into our lives.
  - 4) by living vulnerably among other believers in authentic community.
- **you are introduced to spiritual disciplines**—not as required behaviors to win God's approval, but rather as ways to position yourself to behold God in the fullness of His glory. These include the more traditional and active disciplines of Bible study, Scripture memorization, prayer, and witnessing, as well as the less well-promoted disciplines of abstinence such as silence, fasting, and solitude.

Throughout the *CONNECT* resources, we visit both the active and the passive aspects of our spiritual transformation journey. It is about **doing**, but it's also about **being** and **being done to**! The Holy Spirit using God's Word is a key transforming agent. Thoughtful questions and prayer pauses in every chapter invite participants to explore any doubts and confusion or sensitive areas. This is done without pressing them to reach resolution immediately. This honors each person's process and journey.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix B for an overview showing how *CONNECT* resources fit on a spiritual growth continuum.

### 3. Embracing our true IDENTITY, including our SEXUALITY.



The early adult years are a life season when our sense of identity is being formed. But throughout life we revisit the question “Who am I?” especially in times of transition. *CONNECT* guides you to:

- **discover and live out** of who God says we are.
  - **unpack what it means to be created in God’s image**, to have that image marred and scarred by sin and shame, and then to be transformed to become like Jesus.
- **explore your true identity.** Our identity involves many factors, such as ethnicity, family, nationality, job roles, marriage status, emotional make-up, spiritual gifting, and so forth. It also includes learning to accept and love ourselves as God created us, which frees us to obey Jesus’ Great Commandments to love God and others. Exploring our identity in Christ includes tasting Jesus’ healing of hurts and unresolved wounds by integrating both the painful and the pleasant parts of our being into our identity.
  - **dig deeper into confusion about appropriate sexual behaviors and gender identity.** We explore biblical sexuality, masculinity, and femininity in an open and non-judgmental way. We also explore the symbolic meaning of sexuality, which invites us into a richer understanding of God’s jealous love—a love that protects and cherishes the beloved, especially from the lure of turning to other gods and idolatrous “lovers.”

Spiritual formation is **about Christ being fully developed and completely molded in our lives**, not about having just a perfect belief system or striving to perform in order to look good or impress. It is about becoming more and more like Jesus, integrating more and more His ways, truth, and life (John 14:6) into our own lives. The *CONNECT* resources approach spiritual transformation as an issue related to our true self and identity as Christ is formed in us (Galatians 4:19).

### 4. Fostering grace and truth in COMMUNITY.

Our fragmented way of life unintentionally promotes isolation that can lead to loneliness, rather than the deeply rooted connectedness we all need and long for. So just as Jesus came “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), **so we have the opportunity not just to lead a Bible study or facilitate a small group, but to form or further develop a genuine community of friends. This community lives within the broader Church and Body of Jesus.** *If these groups become excited about loving Jesus and expanding His Kingdom, they can become a positive example and can minister to the congregation in numerous ways. And, as these people become integrated into the church, they have the potential to influence more broadly.*



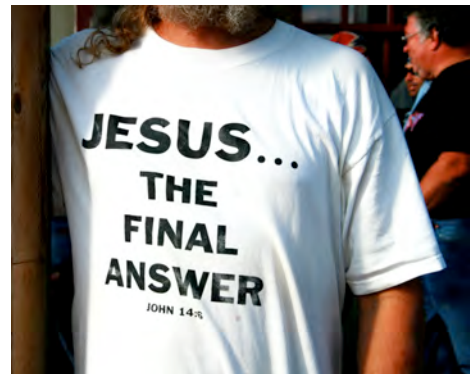
The next generation has been deeply impacted by abuse and abandonment in relationships, especially through divorce and dysfunctional homes. As a result of what they may have missed or experienced in childhood, many find it difficult to receive and give love, to reason selflessly, to trust God and others, to resolve shame, to experience intimacy, to sustain successful life and work, to build healthy relationships, and so forth. The *CONNECT* resources:

- **provide an opportunity to strengthen these basic life and relational skills** within the safety of a small group community of friends.
- **celebrate the worth and uniqueness of each person by experiencing life together.** The next generation isn't just looking for "fellowship" activities or casual social networking. Many of them also want to belong to a genuine spiritual family that can love them as whole people, help heal their wounds, and develop their character. They want to be among people who are pursuing love and practicing the biblical "one another's," with authentic community as an overflow of Jesus' life. They need mentoring which can often happen within the group. These groups can flow into and **bless the larger church community.**
- encourage people to form and develop relationships in and around a *CONNECT* small group. These groups can become environments where people can build trust and offer grace and mercy. Each person can find safety while "in process" on his/her spiritual journey, fostering creative expressions of truth and beauty. They also help members enjoy their unity and diversity without pressuring them into conformity. Under the leadership of a humble, authentic facilitator or small group leader, people in these communities can be empowered to serve others with their God-given design, abilities, and spiritual gifts. Thus they can be integrated into and contribute to the Body of Believers and to society.

## 5. KNOWING TRUTH in the context of Jesus' way and life.

Basic life questions like "How do I know what's true? What is real? What does it mean?" are approached differently by different generations. Those who were raised with a modern worldview generally were socialized by their parents and schools, through the printed and spoken word, using if-then sequential logic, trusting in institutions, and looking to the scientific method. They believed these were the best ways of knowing what is true and improving the human condition.

**Most younger Americans today believe that truth is relative,** especially truth statements about ethics and spirituality. Most Americans have a "no absolutes" mentality, believing that "what's true for you isn't necessarily true for me." They have been disillusioned by science's failure to improve the world (as promised) and by the proliferation of human evil instead of the bettering of the human heart. They are particularly suspicious of hierarchical leaders and authority figures who proclaim truth—then fall into scandal or are corrupted by power.



The *CONNECT* resources are:

- **biblically based**, holding up the Scriptures as the powerful and living Word of God, and as a source of truth one can trust. The Author of Scripture is trustworthy and He delights to reveal His heart and purposes, His truth and meaning to us primarily through the Scriptures.

Jesus claimed that He is the way, the truth, and the life. Much of evangelical Christianity's focus has been primarily on Jesus as the truth. The *CONNECT* resources seek to:

- **emphasize Jesus' incarnational way of life that is supported by truth.** He modeled real life for us. So we highlight wisdom for living life along with truth about God's view of reality.

## 6. Using IMAGES and STORIES to open the doors of the heart and mind.



The next generation learns, responds, and is socialized differently than previous generations were. They have been **profoundly impacted by the thousands of hours spent watching TV, the internet, and playing video games** that would otherwise have been spent with parents, teachers, peers, play, and print. They have been fed a steady diet of images that have powerfully shaped their views of life and God and themselves, while **the written word is losing its power.**

Technology delivers these images (and sound bytes) in random, non-sequential fragments. Just count how many snippets and camera angles occur in one 60-second commercial. It is like a mosaic made up of a thousand dangling pieces of visual information—often held in tension by paradox and unresolved contradictions. It's no wonder that the **lines between reality, virtual reality and alternate realities have become so blurred.** Unfortunately, few young people are taught how to interpret the mosaic of images that bombard them.

In addition to images, using **stories is a powerful way to communicate and remember truth.** Jesus often used stories to connect with the listener's realities. And He used word stories (metaphors) that easily connected to the everyday lives of His listeners. *CONNECT* unpacks passages of Scripture plus highlights biblical stories and stories from today's life as well as images that tell a story.

So the *CONNECT* resources very intentionally include **lots of images** both in color and black and white. These are not merely decorative. Images are included to:

- **help people engage with their hearts as well as their minds.**
- **tap into symbolic reasoning** (to unpack meaning from what you see in addition to what you *read* and *hear*). Like music, images often touch places in our hearts and emotions that verbal logic and reasoning rarely reach—places that truly need the transforming touch of God. For instance, in Pause 4 of almost every chapter, you will be asked to select an image that touched or disturbed you. Much can be learned about ourselves and our group members by thoughtfully processing these images and bringing whatever they stir up in us into the light of God's truth and community.

## 7. Integrating EMOTIONAL and INTELLECTUAL REASONING into DECISION-MAKING.

Which shirt to wear? Which car to buy? Whether or not to stay in a struggling marriage? We might think we make decisions based on our intellectual reasoning or conscious theology. But more often than most of us admit, our emotional reasoning drives our choices. Sometimes, we base decisions on fear or trust, anger or honor, pride or loyalty, shame or delight, disillusionment or jealousy, guilt or humility. **When we choose what our hearts tell us to choose, we are using emotional reasoning**, even if it seems contradictory to what intellectual or “spiritual” reasoning tells us. Many popular resources and discipling methods emphasize **the importance of knowing correct doctrine and doing right behaviors**—and both are important within the transformation process. But the *CONNECT* resources also:



- **emphasize the transformation of the heart and mind that allow integrated behavioral decisions.** They do this by inviting us to bring our emotions as well as our thoughts “captive to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). So you will find questions in the *CONNECT* resources probing your heart and feelings, offering you an opportunity **to be transparent and vulnerable with others**. Be assured that the next generation (both men and women) are looking for authenticity and vulnerability in their relationships with each other, as well as from those who are in leadership and influence roles.

Often we need to engage our hearts (“How do I feel about this?”) along with our heads (“How do I think about this?”) to process spiritual knowledge holistically in ways that lead to transformation. That’s why most *CONNECT* studies:

- **begin with a story, an image, a feeling-oriented question—or all three.** This can open the heart’s door for God’s Spirit to work deeply.
- **invite you to recall your own experiences and reflect on them in order to connect with the presence and work of God.** For example, the question “Where was God when I was abandoned or abused?” becomes an important transformational reflection. Reflecting on our experiences in the light of Scripture shouldn’t lead to unhealthy introspection. Rather, with the support of community, this invites us to challenge contradictions (while still permitting paradoxes), expose lies and self-deception, and discover damaging and manipulative emotional patterns. By addressing our emotional reasoning patterns, God’s Spirit can help us learn from our difficult experiences rather than being defined by them.

## 8. Understanding sin through the lens of SHAME as well as guilt.



God gave humans two important capacities that would alert them to the presence and consequences of sin: **guilt and shame**. Like flashing lights on the dashboard; both are meant to stop us in our tracks and draw us back to Him for healing. When Adam and Eve fell, they went from being “naked and unashamed” to hiding from God and covering their God-given sexual identities under the weight of shame. Guilt told them they had done something wrong by breaking the only rule God gave them. But shame drove them several steps farther from God by telling them they were bad and flawed to the core and deserved God’s punishment, but not His love or mercy.

Modern Western culture is law-based (emphasizing right versus wrong). So when we violate a law (God’s, society’s, our family’s, or our own conscience’s law), we can expect that feelings of guilt will be stirred up. Many explanations of the Gospel walk a seeker through the consequences and remedy for guilt and offer them a way to escape from eternal punishment through repentance.

The younger generation is **less likely to feel guilty about their sinful choices and more likely to feel shameful, worthless, dirty, or soul ugly about themselves**. Many in the next generation also suffer heaped-on shame because of the sins of others committed against them (abuse, abandonment, neglect). All of us taste undeserved shame occasionally, perhaps related to our gender, ethnicity, family, body issues, socio-economic status, perceived failures and other issues. All of us will face the consequences of our choices based on self-pleasure and the pursuit of material wealth.

Since our younger generation has just recently shifted from a guilt-based paradigm to a more shame-based one, it has significant implications for us. They easily become disillusioned, concluding that Christianity “works” for others, but they’re too flawed for it to “work” for them. They may be suspicious of those who offer quick hope. They can be skeptical when assured abruptly that God can change them. When we assure them that God can change them, they may also think something like, “Maybe He can change you, but there’s no way He can change me.” It seems **unreal**. They can become further disillusioned when they see imperfect believers living inauthentic lives in hypocrisy. Both our transparency and vulnerability help them embrace real life as they see it. If we, like David (in Psalms) admit humbly that we also struggle, the younger generation can embrace Jesus’ ways better.

The *CONNECT* resources:

- **take the approach of facing our shame tenderly with others in a compassionate environment** and experiencing God’s offer of mercy and freedom. The theme of facing shame threads through the studies, inviting participants alike to look beneath the surface to the messy issues we prefer to hide.
- **acknowledge that a great deal of shame can attach itself to our sexual identity and behaviors**. These resources journey into identity and sexuality frankly. The hope of transformation offered in the *CONNECT* resources isn’t about perfecting our virtue or having total victory in this world. But we repeatedly invite people into the heart and mind of God—which changes everything.

## 9. Influencing FAMILIES, FRIENDS, CHURCH, and SOCIETY.

**The Gospel is relevant to life—all of life, to all people, and among all groups of people.** It impacts societies by transforming individuals and empowering them to live their lives the way Jesus did—**by overcoming evil with good through love and the power of powerlessness.** More than just bringing truth into the world, Jesus:

- lived among us in a way that pointed to vibrant life
- actively worked as a carpenter for most of His life
- gave us an example of how to go to the nations and into a nation, living among those who do not yet follow Him

**Jesus encouraged people to live among society rather than to withdraw from it.** And impacting society with the Gospel often begins with our families and networks of friends and their friends.

A positive societal impact with the Gospel becomes real when we practice truth-telling with grace, authenticity, and vulnerability in our everyday lives—just as Jesus did. He modeled for us how the Gospel moves through incarnation more than by shooting arrows of truth across the streams of differences.



As *CONNECT* participants grow spiritually, there can be a positive impact in their communities and the local church as people live out Christ-likeness and exercise their spiritual gifts. The church, as a grace and truth community, also becomes an attractive, invitational influence into families and the surrounding society.

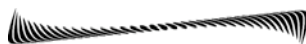
No aspect of society is off limits for the Gospel's power. So *CONNECT* encourages people to move into whatever arenas God places on their hearts. The tribes and sub-cultures in urban and rural areas and across economic divides begin to experience an incarnational Gospel through the lives of people who are experiencing God's presence everywhere.

## 10. Discovering MEANING IN LIFE flowing from God’s heart and purposes.

Most young people not only look for purpose but for meaning, “What does this all mean to me?” and “How can I make sense of life?” are resounding questions.

The *CONNECT* resources:

- **emphasize that life in Christ is real and incredibly meaningful** when viewed through the perspective of God’s heart and purposes, as revealed in Scripture. From chapter to chapter, it paints a grand picture of our heavenly Father’s over-arching purpose in creation and history: to build a family of redeemed sons and daughters, and to invite them into the “family business” of working creatively and ministering among others. It invites each person to view his/her own life story as an important chapter in God’s mega-story. Our lives become Person-driven along with purpose-driven.
- **explore how God wants to extend His Kingdom** as we trust Him for spiritual generations of descendants both inside and outside our biological families. This works through the local church and beyond the local church. As God the Father sent His Son into the world, so Jesus sends us to demonstrate His love, truth, ways, and life to the growing numbers of others who have never tasted our Lord’s goodness. Today two-thirds of the next generation view themselves as being outside the family of God<sup>6</sup>.
- **encourage people to live among society rather than to withdraw from society**—to freely move out wherever God places us—with a sense of creativity and beauty that incorporates truth-telling.
- **invite every person to participate in the Great Commission by challenging us to “make disciples of all nations”**. This calling is unpacked in *CONNECT* chapters related to evangelizing, establishing, and equipping others to live for the glory of God.



These ten paradigms have influenced the design of the *CONNECT* resources, so that they will engage our younger generation in biblical and culturally relevant ways as they pursue their spiritual journeys.

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<sup>6</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity . . . And Why It Matters*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

## CHAPTER 2: Biblical Basis for Living a Transformed Life

Life in our pluralistic culture is very *complex*—especially as we try to negotiate through the seasons of life. That’s why we need to hold on to the *simplicity* of our devotion to Christ and rest in the jealous love of God (2 Corinthians 11:2,3). We need to keep the main things of our faith the main things. But what exactly are the “main things”?

### THE GREAT COMMANDMENT: LOVING GOD

*Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”* –Matthew 22:37,38 (NIV)

In promoting what He called “the greatest commandment” of all, it’s as though Jesus were saying, “Even if you miss everything else, please get this one thing loud and clear: an intimate love relationship with God *really is possible for you!*” That’s because the Jealous Lover of our souls pursues us relentlessly. He has a thousand ways of inviting us to “Come closer!” And the Bridegroom both cherishes and vigilantly guards what rightfully belongs to Him alone: the heart of His Bride.



As we grow in loving God, here are a few questions we can ask:

- Am I simply devoted to God, or do I desire His blessings more than I desire Him?
- Is the depth of my intimacy with Him growing year by year?
- As I approach the holy God, is my heart being broken by my sin, and being healed by His mercy and goodness?
- Do I like God—even in the face of personal and global suffering?

The *CONNECT* resources help people overcome their misconceptions, doubts, and fears about God by learning to behold Him and step into worshipful, trusting relationship with Him.

### THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT: LOVING OTHERS

*“And the second [great commandment] is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”*  
–Matthew 22:39 (NIV)

Jesus’ second great commandment is to love others. We’ll know that we are being transformed when life becomes more about others and less about us . . . When in humility we don’t think less of ourselves, but we think of ourselves less.

Learning to love God is a lot like learning to love people. Just as God restores our individual relationships with Him, He also longs for broken human relationships to be healed. The *CONNECT* resources explore Jesus’ power to “destroy



the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14 [NIV]) that separates groups of people because of their differences in ethnicity, race, gender, religion or socio-economic status. The beauty of reconciled relationships across these divides—especially in our pluralistic society—powerfully draws others to God and builds up the Body of Christ. In a culture littered with the wreckage of strained, disappointing, and broken relationships, nothing speaks louder about the power of the Gospel to transform than to see people being forgiven and reconciled with their personal and cultural enemies and those different from them.

As we grow in loving others, here are a few questions we can ask:

- Do I genuinely love people who are different from me?
- Do I listen to others and learn the ways in which they love to be loved? Or am I a distant lover?
- Do I engage in other people’s suffering?

The *CONNECT* resources strongly emphasize living out the ways of Jesus in all of our relationships as a key evidence of our ongoing transformation.

## THE SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT: LOVING YOURSELF

*You can’t really love other people well unless you are at home in your own soul.  
You will simply be too afraid.*

—Paula Rinehart, *Strong Women, Soft Hearts*<sup>7</sup>

The next aspect of Jesus’ great commandments urges us to love ourselves. Not narcissistically or selfishly, but soberly. For some, loving ourselves seems harder than loving others. Perhaps our inner journey compels us to face some sad conditions of our hearts. Sometimes it takes a personal crisis or moral failure for us to see the truth about ourselves that God has seen all along, so we become convinced that we are unlovable. We may respond with self-condemnation (“I hate who I am”) or with self-deception (“It’s not true; I’m not that bad.”)



<sup>7</sup> Paula Rinehart, *Strong Women, Soft Hearts* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), p. 97.

The Apostle Paul saw himself as a *righteous Pharisee* before coming to Christ, then as “the least of the *apostles*” in his early years of ministry, then as “the least of the *saints*,” and finally as “the chief of all *sinners*” in his later years. So we shouldn’t expect to experience our spiritual transformation as a seamless ascent through the years. We’ll likely experience ups and downs. Paul, for example, had increasing awareness of his own sinfulness and brokenness over the stages of his life. This was matched by his ever-growing awareness of God’s love and an ever-deepening experience of His grace and mercy. That’s a journey of maturing. That is why we can:

*... set our hearts at rest in his presence when our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.* –1 John 3:19,20 (NIV)

Loving ourselves invites us to address (not deny):

- the deep issues of our hearts, especially those that lie hidden “under the waterline” where they pose a greater threat.
- the lies we believe, along with our addictions, hurtful relational habits, and hardness of heart.
- our biases, prejudices, blindness, and pet sins.
- or anything else that lies submerged and unaddressed in our lives.

Unfortunately, too often we see our sin and unresolved issues as a huge barrier standing *between* us and God—something we ourselves should face before we can experience a healthy relationship with Him. But it is a transforming moment when we can stand *side by side* with God, facing our sin together, and hearing Him say, “You can’t do it alone, but I can help!”

It is equally transforming when we become humble and vulnerable enough to invite trusted brothers and sisters in Christ right into the messy issues of our hearts. Genuine community with emotional authenticity means that we stand shoulder-to-shoulder, each facing our struggles with sin and shame and pain together, rather than trying to sort them out alone.

This messy process is both active and passive. While we actively address our deep heart issues, we also trust God’s Spirit to purify and heal us. Sometimes we will groan; sometimes we will be filled with joy. And sometimes we will do both at the same time, like Jesus “who for the joy set before him endured the cross” (from Hebrews 12:2 [NIV]). As we grow in loving ourselves as His Beloved, here are some transformational questions to ask periodically:

- Am I developing as a human being?
- Am I addressing the issues of my heart and growing in the fruit of the Spirit through the opportunities and crises of life?
- Am I groaning with joy (being authentic emotionally with myself and others)?



The *CONNECT* resources regularly ask which friend or trusted mentor you could ask to walk with you through a particular struggle. That’s because transformation happens in community, not in isolation.

## THE GREAT COMMISSION: MAKING DISCIPLES



In the two Great Commandments, Jesus called His disciples into the main *relational* adventures in life—loving God and loving others. He invites His disciples from every generation into the *missional* adventure called the Great Commission. The most familiar expression of the Great Commission is found in Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV):

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Many churches and para-church organizations identify this Great Commission as the core of their mission, and many individuals embrace disciple-making as their passion and God's call on their lives. Sometimes we need reminding that disciples aren't mass-produced by programs—however well designed and executed. There is a danger if we see people as projects. Rather disciples are grown in a relational environment and in multi-generational communities where they can experience Kingdom living life-on-life.

While growing as ambassadors for Christ, these questions may help guide our paths:

- As Jesus' disciple, am I growing in Christlikeness?
- Do I practice ways of demonstrating the realities of the Gospel to those who don't yet believe?
- Do I pray for those whom God is seeking to redeem?
- Am I active in a church or community that shares this commitment to make disciples?
- Am I engaged in helping multiply disciples as I use the spiritual gifts God has given me?

The *CONNECT* resources provide a strong foundation for people who share this calling. You'll notice the themes of advancing the Gospel of Jesus and His kingdom, living among and influencing the lost for Christ, intentionally helping others grow spiritually, trusting God for spiritual generations, incarnating Christ in our relationships, and contributing our spiritual gifts to the Body of Christ—all themes that help equip someone for service to the Great Commission. Participants in a *CONNECT* study also learn to understand and converse the Gospel naturally (although they're not confined to a particular illustration). They also become motivated to share how Jesus has impacted their lives.

## THE CULTURE and NATURE COMMANDS

Matthew 28 is not the first or the only commission God gave us. It goes back to the Garden of Eden.

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." . . . The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. —Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15 (NIV)*



Here God gave two sweeping commands (or commissions) to the human race, male and female together, regarding their everyday lives and life work over time.

1. **THE CULTURE COMMAND** (“be fruitful . . . increase in number . . . fill the earth”) tasked us to create the families, societies, and cultures of the world. This includes creating the systems needed to sustain them, such as the political, economic, social, educational and scientific systems.
2. **THE NATURE COMMAND** (“rule over every living creature” and “work [the Garden of Eden] and take care of it”) tasked us with stewarding nature and the environment.

Jesus Himself is our example for obeying the Great Commandment by loving God, others, and Himself. He also showed us how to obey the Culture and Nature Commands by devoting many years to the simple family and community life of an ordinary Jewish carpenter, followed by three years discipling people.

Every member of *God’s family* can participate somehow, based on their gifting, in making disciples and spiritual generations. But every member of the entire *family of humanity* is also called and commissioned by God to carry out these two tasks—as co-regents with Him. The question is whether we will pursue these tasks in God’s way or not.

The *CONNECT* Resources invite people to contribute to the building of society and the stewardship of nature as part of their obedience to God.

## SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION: BECOMING LIKE CHRIST

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us **throw off** everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and **let us run** with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us **fix our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

—Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

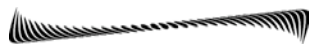
This athletic metaphor captures three fundamental aspects of our life-long journey of spiritual transformation, all of which are central in the *CONNECT* resources: **looking beneath**, **looking beside**, and **looking beyond**.



**BENEATH** the surface, each of us at times, will carry heavy, unnecessary burdens of sin and shame and unresolved issues that get in the way that we need to “throw off.” Being transformed invites us to identify the sins we are most vulnerable to because of our personalities, weaknesses, professions, or past behavior. Just as no runner would strap on heavy weights to run a race, so we need to strip off anything that entangles us. We have the wonderful but often scary opportunity of bringing our inner issues and concerns into the light of confession (James 5:16). This is so that Jesus can heal us, as a loving Church and Body of Christ helps foster spiritual health.

The journey of spiritual transformation includes rich opportunities on every **SIDE** to love, serve, steward, and contribute by obeying the Great Commandments, the Great Commission and the Culture and Nature Commands. But that same journey also includes obstacles that can cause us to grow weary and lose heart and give up. In running our race we shouldn’t avoid these challenges, but help each other patiently endure and actively persist through them as Jesus did.

How did Jesus, our supreme example, manage to run His race so well? By fixing His eyes confidently on His Father and the prospect of gaining everlasting glory for God and for us. We do it the same way—by constantly looking **BEYOND** our besetting sins and the opposition and shame others heap on us in order to “fix our eyes on Jesus.” We do this by searching the Scriptures and by cultivating our intimacy with Him using various spiritual disciplines. In worship we behold His holy life, His unwavering security in His Father’s love, His patient perseverance in trouble, His humble unselfish love for the unlovable, His final success and triumph—and especially all the joy this gave Him. When we experience becoming a little more like Him in these ways, we know we’re being transformed, too.



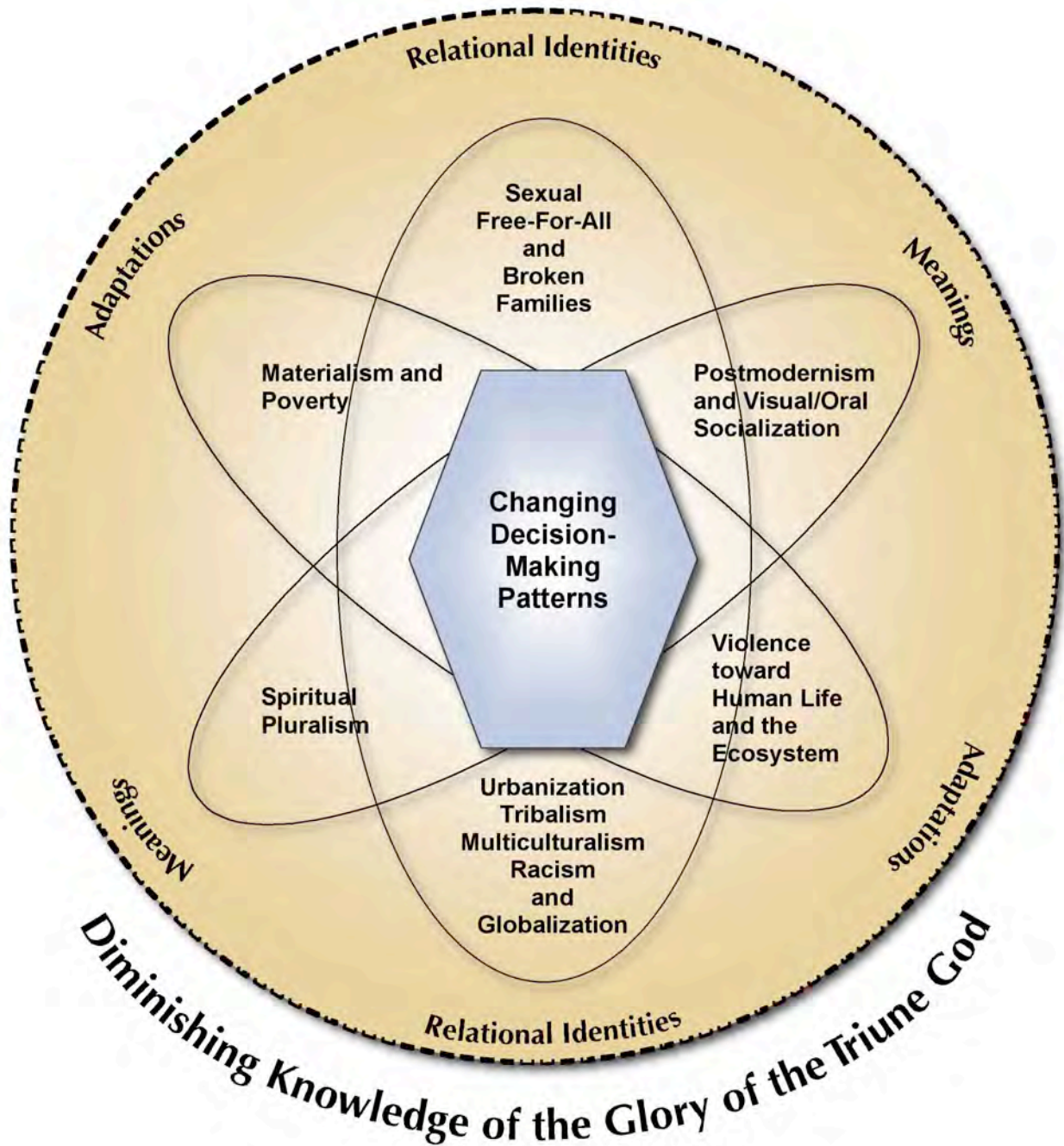
## CLOSING THOUGHTS

Our hope is that those who use the *CONNECT* Series, will deeply meet with the Triune God and each other through God’s Word. As they truly behold and abide in Jesus, God can transform them to influence the local church and community and multiply into society and the nations! May God alone be glorified. Amen!

## APPENDIX A:

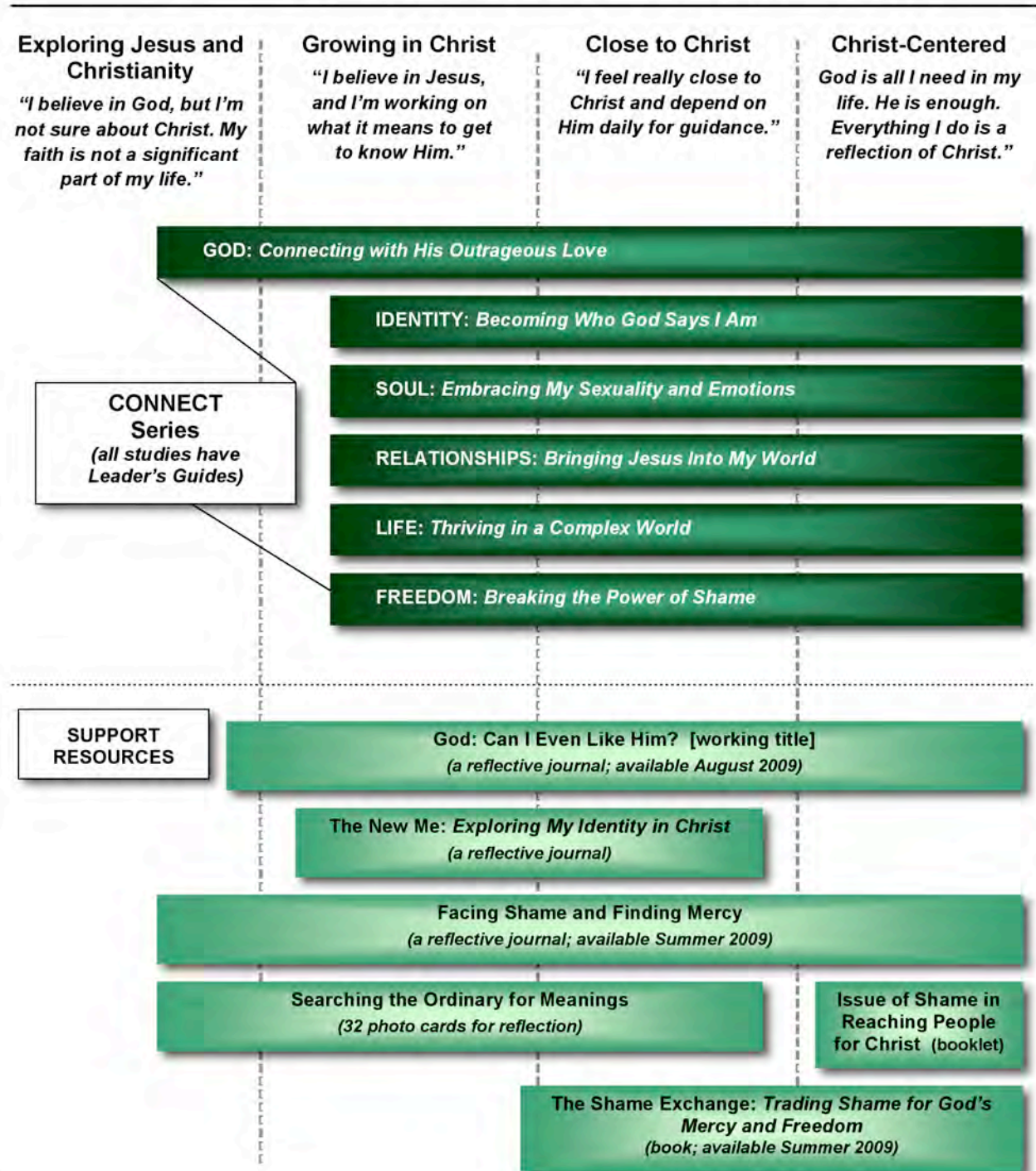
CONNECT resources have been developed primarily for people in the 18-35 age group who were socialized within the USA cultural context. However, they have also been **well received by older adults** in our field tests.

# USA Cultural Context



# APPENDIX B: *CONNECT* Resources on a Spiritual Continuum\*

## A Spiritual Continuum\* and the *CONNECT* Resources



\*Spiritual continuum modified from Willow Creek Association

# APPENDIX C: How to Lead a *CONNECT* Group

A free downloadable Leader's Guide is available for each of the *CONNECT* studies at [www.navpress.com/connect](http://www.navpress.com/connect). Below are four general guidelines for leading a group through the *CONNECT* studies.

## 1. ENJOYING YOUR ROLE AS A LEADER

What images come to mind as you think about leading a group through a *CONNECT* study? Do you imagine your group members expecting you to have it all together? Or to be an expert on the Bible? Or to offer profound answers to their tough life questions? If so, you can relax! Even if such a person exists somewhere, that's not really what your group members need from you.

Your most important role as a leader is to be an **authentic person and let God's Spirit use the process**. You don't have to have it all together. But be willing to consider sharing your brokenness, shortcomings, and barriers as well as breakthroughs, victories, and strengths with others in the group. Authentic journeyers influence more that instruct . . . encourage more than enlighten . . . and gently tell the truth as the Holy Spirit nudges. They keep it real and invite others to join them on their journey of lifelong transformation in Christ.

So relax! As an authentic journeyer, you don't need to be an expert. Your role is to come **alongside** your group members and help them process whatever they are discovering. You are not alone in leading. God's Spirit will work AND use others in the group to minister to each other. This includes:

- taking the initiative to keep things moving ahead by asking good questions (more than giving "right" answers).
- listening to the views of your group members (even if you don't agree).
- giving room for the Scriptures to teach (rather than doing the teaching yourself).
- helping the group create and develop an environment where each one offers safety and grace and truth to the others.

What you do outside of the small group time may be just as important as what happens when you get together to discuss your study. So be creative when it comes to deepening relationships life-on-life. You could pray for group members, call, text, or e-mail them throughout the week. You could just do life together, grab dinner or work, play, or hang out together. Some in your group may become more ready for either a casual or intensive mentoring relationship. This Leader's Guide will help you build relationships on your journeys with Christ.

## 2. EXPERIENCING SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

So what is spiritual transformation? And how does it happen? Spiritual transformation is the mysterious work of God's Spirit maturing the human soul into the likeness of Christ. It is the life-long change process by which God restores His image in us that was marred by sin. He does this by transforming our hearts, minds, wills, and bodies over the course of our lifetime, all for His glory. He also brings healing influence to our brokenness, difficult life issues, unresolved sin, wounding and relationships—with ourselves, our family, friends, the lost, society, and within the Church .

While God is the initiator and sustainer of our transformation, we participate with Him in the process with an attitude of humble dependence and submission. It's not just about skill in facilitating. Our example of **admitting**

**that we're broken—to ourselves, to God, to others—releases God** to continue His deep work within us. So we lead by humbly offering our whole selves to God. God can really use us to influence others when we, as leaders, are responsive to His healing work, and released to relate to others out of our brokenness rather than our pseudo have-it-all-together-ness. Cultivating lifelong habits of beholding God and worshipping Him 24/7 become **powerful examples** of our leadership.

Biblical spiritual transformation stands in sharp contrast to the many alternative views of spiritual formation offered by Scientology, Hinduism, Buddhism and many others. Biblically, the power to experience such deep change comes from four sources:

- 1) through the life and continuing prayers of Jesus
- 2) by the indwelling work of God's Holy Spirit
- 3) through the Living Word of God in the Scriptures
- 4) and among an authentic community and Body of believers (I Corinthians 12)

This change, to become more and more like Jesus, is the heart of spiritual formation.

### 3. BUILDING AN ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

So what do spiritual friends actually do for each other? Among other things, they create and protect a relational environment packed with “grace upon grace,” truth, authenticity, and creativity. An environment of grace is a place where:

- all of us can bring our condemnation, shame, guilt, and sin out of hidden darkness
- we receive unmerited favor, acceptance and love from God and others
- my grace motivates and provides safety for you to mature, affirms your identity, and gives you room to live creatively
- guilt and shame aren't used as methods to motivate, discipline, or manipulate

Instead, people are invited to bring their sin issues and shame out of hiding into the light where there is hope of healing in Christ.

In such an environment anchored by the truth of Scripture to guide, correct, and instruct, God asks us to experience Him as *the Truth* in our culture jaded by spin, hype, relativism, and outright lies. Our truthfulness admits when things aren't working in relationships, offers alternatives, and identifies obstacles to grace and love. When kindness like this leads to repentance, the painful realities of our sinful and broken condition are exposed and handled gently. Truth flourishes in non-manipulative and non-legalistic environments where people experience trust, respect, understanding, and empathy.

In this kind of environment, followers of Christ experience the fertile soil of profound life transformation as described by Larry Crabb:

*In the middle of the wild ocean of shattered dreams and broken lives, the community of Christ celebrates God's forgiveness; they believe in what each other could become, they never minimize sin but they love to maximize grace. They are carriers of Christ to each other. That's what spiritual friends do when they act together on a journey to God.*

—Dr. Lawrence Crabb, *The Safest Place on Earth*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Lawrence Crabb, *The Safest Place on Earth* (Nashville, TN: 1999, W Publishing Group, a Division of Thomas Nelson, Inc.) p. 179

A good group discussion involves trust. As people in your group develop trust among themselves, the quality of your discussions will deepen. You can guide this process by sharing your struggles and failures, not just your successes and growth. Each time you meet, trust is being developed or eroded. You can also help nurture trust by praying specifically for God to build a safe environment among your group. You may from time to time address this issue by encouraging people to be honest and to keep what is shared in the group confidential.

#### 4. SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

There is a simple structure to the *CONNECT Series*: six Bible study books, each containing 10 chapters. Each chapter is divided into four sections or parts called “Pauses.” **Each group member prepares the study on his/her own ahead of time, writing down something for each question.** For most people, this personal preparation takes an hour or more per chapter.

When the group gets together to discuss each chapter, they may go at **whatever pace suits them.** Many groups choose to discuss one whole chapter at a sitting. If so, that takes about 90 minutes, and they only discuss selected questions—not all of the questions in the study. Discussing one chapter per week will take most groups about 3 months to complete the book. Other groups choose a more leisurely pace by meeting bi-weekly, or only discussing half a chapter per week. These studies can also be used as a daily devotional guide in preparation for the group discussion.

There is also a conceptual scope and sequence in the *CONNECT Series* that appeals to our intellectual reasoning. The underlying concepts explore loving God, loving self, loving others, and living life well. The list of the *CONNECT* resources at the end of this document shows that suggested series sequence. However, we encourage groups to select the studies in whatever order best meets their needs. There is no violation of flow or logical sequence by **using the studies in any order you want to.**

In addition, **a topical approach to the Scriptures, such as the *CONNECT Series*, needs to be balanced with reading and studying the books of the Bible as a whole.** We suggest that groups alternate between these approaches in order to gain a broader understanding of God’s view of reality and to behold the glorious Triune God.

**Each study in the *CONNECT Series* has a Leader’s Guide** tailored specifically to that study, highlighting 8-12 key questions out of each chapter. It is packed with lots of support and suggestions for leading others. It is available in free, downloadable form from [www.navpress.com/connect](http://www.navpress.com/connect).

We believe God can be powerful in these communities, into the church and into the Nations!

#### **SO, CAN WE TRUST GOD TOGETHER AS LEADERS TO:**

- let God’s Spirit use His Word through the process as designed in the flow of each chapter of *CONNECT*? (this may mean “getting out of the way”)?
- let ourselves become intimate with Jesus as we are transformed together?
- grow toward vulnerable humility to be more truly authentic?
- embrace the privilege God gives us to expand His Gospel and uplift His Glory?

# List of *CONNECT* Resources

Available from NavPress, [www.NavPress.com](http://www.NavPress.com) > Bible Studies > Connect

OR

call Customer Service toll-free in the USA at: 1-800-366-7788

## *CONNECT* Bible Study Series

**GOD:** *Connecting with His Outrageous Love*

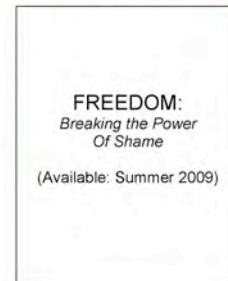
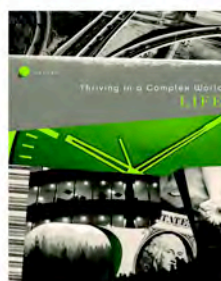
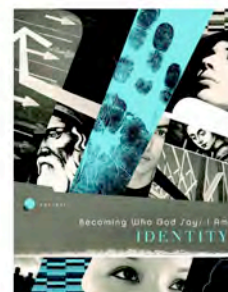
**IDENTITY:** *Becoming Who God Says I Am*

**SOUL:** *Embracing My Sexuality and Emotions*

**RELATIONSHIPS:** *Bringing Jesus into My World*

**LIFE:** *Thriving in a Complex World*

**FREEDOM:** *Breaking the Power of Shame*  
(available Summer 2009)



## *CONNECT* Reflective Journals

*The New Me: My New Identity in Christ*

*God: Can I Even Like Him?* [working title]  
(available Fall 2009)

*Facing Shame and Finding Mercy*  
(available Summer 2009)

## Supplemental *CONNECT* Resources

*Scripture Memory and Meditation Cards* for *CONNECT* Series.

*Leader's Guides* for each book in the *CONNECT* Series—free downloadable guides.

*Searching the Ordinary for Meanings* by Ralph Ennis  
32-card photography set reflecting on the richness of life.

*The Issue of Shame in Reaching People for Christ* by Ralph and Jennifer Ennis and Paula Rinehart. A guide to help believers penetrate a veil of shame in sharing the Gospel with the next generation.

*The Shame Exchange: Trading Shame for God's Mercy and Freedom* by Steve and Sally Breedlove and Ralph and Jennifer Ennis (available Summer 2009).