

BIBLE STUDY

Connected On Purpose

Jesus didn't move through ministry randomly. He was intentional about *who* He connected with, *when* He connected with them, and *why*. Following the Leader means we also must become students of relationships because the wrong connection at the wrong time can cost you your assignment.

Three Anchoring Truths

1. The Right Connection — Jesus and the Father

John 5:19, John 15:5

Jesus constantly modeled His primary connection was vertical before horizontal. Everything He did flowed out of His relationship with the Father. He said, "*The Son can do nothing by Himself; He can only do what He sees His Father doing.*" That's not weakness — that's wisdom. He understood the most important relationship He carried was the one no one else could see.

- **Key Point:** Before you evaluate your horizontal relationships, check your vertical one. A compromised connection with God leads to tolerating the wrong connections with people. When we are properly aligned above, we gain discernment about what to allow beside us.

The Vertical Audit — *Where Am I in This Relationship?*

God's side of the relationship never wavers. His love is unchanging, His commitment is covenant, and His presence is constant. He is not the variable. *We* are. The audit is never about questioning God's faithfulness — it's about honestly examining our own posture toward Him.

Below are five questions to help believers assess where *they* are in their relationship w God:

1. Is Prayer Still Conversational or Has It Become Ceremonial?

When our relationship with God is healthy, prayer feels like dialogue — we talk to Him and we're sensitive to hearing from Him. When the relationship has drifted, prayer becomes a religious routine — words said out of habit with no real expectation of connection. Ask yourself: *Am I actually talking to God, or am I just saying prayers?* There's a difference between a conversation and a performance.

2. Does His Word Still Speak to You Personally?

Scripture has a unique quality — when we are close to God, it feels alive, specific, and timely. It finds us where we are. But when distance has crept in, the Bible can feel like information rather than instruction — you read it without it reading you. If the Word has gone from a lamp to just literature, that's a signal worth paying attention to. (Psalm 119:105, Hebrews 4:12)

3. Is There Unconfessed Sin Creating Static?

Sin doesn't sever the relationship — but it does disrupt the fellowship. Think of it like a phone call with bad interference. God is still on the line, but the static makes it hard to hear clearly. Unconfessed sin, unresolved offense, or hidden compromise can create that kind of spiritual

static. The Psalmist said, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”* (Psalm 66:18) The good news is that confession clears the line immediately. (1 John 1:9)

4. Am I Still Sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s Promptings?

One of the clearest signs of a healthy vertical relationship is sensitivity to the Spirit — that inner nudge to pray for someone, to hold your tongue, to go a different direction, to give, to stop, to go. When we drift from God, that sensitivity dulls. We start overriding the prompts without much conviction. Ask yourself: *When the Holy Spirit nudges me, do I respond — or do I routinely rationalize it away?*

5. Is Worship Still Genuine or Has It Become Mechanical?

Worship is one of the purest expressions of relationship. When you are close to God, gratitude and praise flow naturally — even in difficulty. When distance has set in, worship can become something you participate in externally without engaging internally. You can sing every word and be completely absent from the moment. Check your worship — not the performance of it, but the sincerity of it.

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” — James 4:8

The goal is not condemnation — it’s course correction. The prodigal son’s father saw him while he was still a great way off — which means the Father was watching and waiting. (Luke 15:20) The audit simply helps you recognize where you are so you can close the gap.

- **Questions to Ponder:** *How does your relationship with God influence who you allow into your inner circle? How does your relationship with God influence who you extract from your inner circle?*

2. The Right Season — Jesus and Both Johns

Matthew 3:13-17, Luke 1:5-17, John 1:29-34, John 13:23, John 19:26-27

Jesus had a significant relationship with *two* men named John — and they represent two entirely different kinds of connections, both of which were necessary.

John the Baptist — The Launching Connection

John the Baptist was Jesus’ forerunner. Before Jesus ever performed a miracle or preached a sermon, John was in the wilderness preparing the way. When Jesus came to be baptized, something powerful happened — the heavens opened, the Spirit descended, and the Father spoke affirmation over Jesus publicly. John didn’t just baptize Jesus; he *commissioned* him into his public assignment.

But notice — John the Baptist was never a follower of Jesus. His role was not to walk alongside Jesus but to announce Him and then step back. John himself said it clearly: *“He must increase, but I must decrease.”* (John 3:30) John the Baptist was a forerunner, not a companion. His connection to Jesus was purposeful, powerful — and temporary by design.

- **Key Point:** Some people enter your life not to walk with you, but to *launch* you. They speak a word over you, open a door, make the introduction, or affirm what God placed in you — and then their season concludes. You honor them, you are grateful for them, but you don’t chase them into a chapter they weren’t assigned to. Trying to hold a launcher beyond their season can actually slow your momentum.

John the Disciple — The Sustaining Connection

John the disciple tells a completely different story. He was part of the inner circle — present at the Transfiguration, reclining next to Jesus at the Last Supper, standing at the foot of the cross when most had fled, and running to the empty tomb on resurrection morning. He was there in the high moments and the hard ones.

The depth of this connection is perhaps best seen at the cross. In one of His final acts before death, Jesus looked down and entrusted His mother Mary to John's care. (John 19:26-27) You don't make that kind of request of a casual acquaintance. John had proven himself across every season — and Jesus knew it.

- **Key Point:** Some people are assigned to go the distance with you. They are present in the glory and in the grief. They are consistent, trustworthy, and proven over time. These relationships are rare and must be stewarded with great care. Don't be so focused on building a crowd that you neglect cultivating your Johns.

The Danger Zone

One of the most costly mistakes we make in relationships is *treating a John the Baptist like a John the Disciple*. We expect someone to sustain what they were only anointed to start. When they transition out of our lives — naturally or abruptly — we feel abandoned, confused, or even bitter. But God may have simply completed their assignment. The question isn't *why did they leave* — the question is *what did they launch?*

- **Discussion Question:** *Can you identify a "John the Baptist" in your life — someone who launched you but wasn't meant to stay? And do you have a "John the Disciple" — someone proven across seasons?*

3. The Right Assignment — Jesus and the Twelve

Luke 6:12-13

Before Jesus chose the twelve, He spent the *whole night in prayer*. He didn't choose based on résumé, popularity, or potential alone — He chose by divine direction. And even then, one was a Judas — a reminder that not every close connection is a covenant connection.

- **Key Point:** Some people are assigned to your life to *develop* you. Others are assigned to *distract or derail* you. Prayer is the filter.
- **Discussion Question:** *How prayerful are you about the people you're allowing to speak into your life and walk closely with you?*

Practical Teaching Points

1. Proximity is not the same as alignment.

Just because someone is close to you doesn't mean they are *for* you. Judas sat at the same table as Jesus, dipped bread in the same bowl, and walked in the same ministry for three years

— yet his heart was never fully aligned with Jesus’ mission. Proximity can create the *illusion* of alignment without the *reality* of it. This is why you cannot evaluate a relationship based on how long someone has been around or how close they appear. The real question is: Are we moving in the same direction, under the same Spirit, toward the same purpose? You can share a pew with someone whose assignment is to pull you off course. Discernment is not suspicion — it is wisdom.

2. Access is a gift — steward it.

Not everyone deserves the same level of access to your life, your vision, or your vulnerability. Jesus modeled this consistently. He taught the crowds, but He invested in the twelve. He opened up deeper truth to the twelve, but He took only Peter, James, and John up the mountain of Transfiguration. He shared His heart most intimately with John. There were *layers* of access — and each layer was intentional. When you give everyone the same access, you devalue what’s sacred. Your dreams, your struggles, your inner life — these are not for public consumption. Be generous with your presence, but be careful with your depth. The right people will honor what you share; the wrong ones will use it.

3. You cannot outgrow the weight of the wrong connections.

History and Scripture are filled with examples of gifted, called people whose potential was diminished by the wrong relationships. Samson was anointed from birth — yet Delilah extracted his secret and his strength. Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived — yet his foreign wives turned his heart from God. Rehoboam had the legacy of David and the wisdom of Solomon available to him — yet he chose the counsel of young, immature advisors over seasoned elders, and it split a kingdom. In every case, the gift was real. The calling was real. But the connection was wrong — and it became a ceiling. You may be highly gifted, deeply called, and genuinely anointed — but if you are yoked to the wrong person, their weight will eventually become your limitation.

4. But the right connection can accelerate your destiny.

On the other side of that same truth — the right relationship at the right moment can do what years of effort alone cannot. Ruth refused to leave Naomi, and that covenant loyalty positioned her for Boaz, redemption, and a place in the lineage of Christ. David and Jonathan’s covenant protected David’s life during the most dangerous season of his journey. Paul poured into Timothy, and Timothy carried the gospel forward in ways Paul could no longer go physically. Elijah deposited into Elisha, and Elisha ended up walking in a double portion of what Elijah carried. The right connection doesn’t just add to your life — it *multiplies* it. Ask God to send you the connections that are aligned with where He is taking you.

Closing Challenge

“Show me your connections and I’ll show you your direction.”

Have participants reflect quietly or journal on three questions:

- Who has God placed in my life for this season and assignment?
- Is there a connection I need to prayerfully re-evaluate?
- Am I being the right connection for someone else?

Suggested Scriptures

- **Proverbs 13:20** — *Walk with the wise and become wise*
- **1 Corinthians 15:33** — *Bad company corrupts good character*
- **Amos 3:3** — *Can two walk together unless they agree?*
- **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10** — *Two are better than one*
- **John 3:30** — *He must increase, but I must decrease*
- **John 19:26-27** — *Jesus entrusts Mary to John*
- **Luke 6:12-13** — *Jesus prays all night before choosing the twelve*
- **James 4:8** — *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you*
- **Luke 15:20** — *The father saw him while he was still a great way off*