



## What does the Scripture say?

### *Connecting for the Kingdom* Selected Texts

#### **Introduction:**

No one lives in isolation. We interact with people all the time. So God's plan for Believers is to use them to connect with others for His Kingdom purposes. We seek to interact for impact!

Jesus said in **Matthew 22:37-39** that the greatest commandment is to: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*<sup>38</sup> *This is the first and greatest commandment.*<sup>39</sup> *And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’* We can easily see how these two commands follow one another. When we love God with all that we are, we love others as well because our love for God moves us to love others for His glory.

As Believers, then, we are always seeking to connect with others for God's Kingdom purposes. We want our interactions and relationships with others to impact them for Christ.

We can see how various Believers in the Scripture connected with others for God's Kingdom purposes. In this message, we will look at three passages which demonstrate how Christ's followers connected with others for the purposes of evangelism, edification, and equipping.

#### **1. Connecting for Evangelism (John 1:35-51)**

There are three things which are interesting about this text in terms of how it relates to the subject of connecting with others for God's Kingdom purposes in evangelism or sharing the Gospel with others. First, this is the first time Jesus is interacting with others in His public ministry. In other words, the day after John the Baptist sees Jesus, two of his disciples hear him announce that Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:36), and so they set out to follow Christ. One of those disciples was Andrew (John 1:30). Then John tells us in **John 1:41-42** that *“the first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.”* Second, the first person Andrew told about Jesus right after he met Christ was his brother, a family member. And third, after Jesus called Philip to follow Him, Philip found Nathanael and told him about Christ (John 1:43-45a).

So here are three points of application from this passage for us as they relate to the call we have to connect with others for evangelism. First, after we come to know Christ, God desires for us to share with others immediately about how we have come to meet Christ. While we may need some time to memorize Scripture and learn about different ways to share the Gospel with others, we can immediately share our personal testimony with others about Jesus.



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There are several examples of personal testimonies in Scripture (see Galatians 1:11-24). There are three parts to every testimony. The first part focuses on life before Christ (Galatians 1:13-14). Here is where Believers share about their need for Christ. The second part focuses on coming to know Christ (Galatians 1:15-17). Here is where Believers share about how the Holy Spirit convicted them of their sin and showed them how they can experience God's salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as they respond to Him in repentance and faith by God's grace. The third part focuses on a changed life after Christ (Galatians 1:18-24). Here is where Believers share about how God is at work in their lives daily as they learn to follow Christ.

A personal testimony is one of the best ways for Believers to immediately begin connecting with others for evangelism because they do not have to "memorize" anything. Since they already know their story and what Jesus did for them, they can simply begin sharing it with others. A great practical tool to use in organizing and putting a personal testimony together is a website called 5clicks.com ([www.5clicks.com](http://www.5clicks.com)). This simple website guides Believers through a step-by-step process for sharing their personal testimony.

Obviously, the whole purpose for sharing our testimony with others is to share the Gospel with them. So Believers will want to incorporate Scripture about the Gospel as they share their testimony. For instance, when Believers share about their need for Christ, they can highlight the fact that Scripture says we all need Christ because we're all sinners (Romans 3:23). Also, when Believers share about how they came to know Christ, they can highlight the fact that Scripture says Jesus is the only way to heaven (John 14:6), and salvation is God's gift through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, promised to those who confess Jesus as Lord and believe in Him (Romans 5:8-10; 6:23; 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8-9). Lastly, when Believers share about how they have been transformed and continue to grow their faith, they can highlight the fact that Scripture says God transforms everyone in Christ and works to finish the good work He begins in them (2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 1:6).

Second, God desires for us to connect with our family members so they can hear the message of God's salvation through Christ. Just as Andrew found his brother Peter and told him about Jesus, we naturally want our family members to know about Christ. While this can be a very difficult connection to make, it is one that weighs heavily on our hearts as Believers because we want our loved ones to know the salvation we have personally experienced in Christ.

One practical point to really take to heart on this front is to ask God for patience when sharing the Gospel with our family members. Many times we want others to believe the Gospel the very first time we share it with them, but the reality is that God has to draw them to Himself. As much as we want to, we cannot make someone believe in Christ.



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**John 7:5** says that “*even [Jesus]’ own brothers did not believe in him.*” Of course, things changed for Christ’s brothers after His resurrection (Acts 1:12-14), but there was clearly a period of time when they did not believe.

So what should Believers do when they share with their family members who have not yet come to know Christ? They should remain prayerful, patient, and practice what they preach! Always pray that God will draw people to Himself. Always seek to love others and stay connected with them so that you can have future opportunities to share the Gospel, and always ask God to fill you with His power to live an example before others so that they can see the difference Christ has made in your life.

Third, God desires for us to connect with our friends and acquaintances so they can hear the Gospel. This is what Philip did with Nathanael, and it’s an excellent example of how we can connect with our friends and acquaintances. We all have “circles of influence” and people that God brings across our paths. We need to see all of these connections as God’s design to use us for His Kingdom purposes in evangelism. Paul says in **Colossians 4:5-6**, “*Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*”

We need to ask God to enable us to be constantly mindful about how we can turn every contact and conversation with others to the Gospel. It’s His desire that we connect with our family and our friends for His Kingdom purposes in evangelism.

### **2. Connecting for Edification (Acts 9:26-31)**

The word “edification” basically means to build someone up. In other words, we need to ask God to help us connect with other Believers in such a way that their lives flourish in Christ.

We see a great example of this in Acts 9:26-31. Earlier in this chapter, Christ saves Paul (or Saul). Of course, prior to his conversion, Paul persecuted Christians. He was known as someone who wanted to harm the Church (Acts 9:13-14). But after Christ saved him, Paul was transformed from a persecutor of the Faith to a preacher of the Faith (Galatians 1:23).

But many disciples had their doubts about Paul when he first tried to tell them that he had come to know Christ. Luke tells us in Acts 9:26b that “[the disciples] were all afraid of [Paul], not believing that he really was a disciple.”

So this is where we see how Barnabas acted in three ways to connect with Paul for edification in Acts 9:27. First, Barnabas simply took action. He did not sit idly by while Paul was cut off from connecting with the disciples. Of course, if we know anything about Barnabas from Scripture, we are not surprised by this. We know that Barnabas



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is a giving person because we learn in Acts 4:37 about how he sold some land and donated the proceeds to the Church. We also read in Acts 4:36 that his name even means “Son of Encouragement,” and we discover in Acts 15:36-41 that Barnabas wanted to give John Mark another chance to come on a mission trip when Paul was convinced that John Mark should not journey with them because he deserted them on a previous mission trip. So we can see how Barnabas was giving, generous, and gracious.

Of course, Barnabas was not perfect. We also read in Galatians 2:11-14a how Barnabas was entangled in the hypocrisy of Peter. It’s not difficult for us to imagine how Barnabas’ strength to help others also was a challenge for him at times to stand up to others when they were going in the wrong direction. But, in terms of the positive side of his quality as a “Son of Encouragement,” Barnabas was a Believer who wanted to move into action to build others up, and this is exactly what he did when he realized the disciples were not giving Paul a chance to connect with them because they were judging him in light of his past.

Second, Barnabas took Paul and brought him to the disciples. Here we see how Barnabas “put his neck on the line” for Paul. He did what no one else was willing to do. While everyone else was trying to keep a “safe distance” from Paul, Barnabas put his arm around him and personally took him to the disciples. In doing this, Barnabas was attaching his good reputation to Paul so that others might be more inclined to welcome Paul into their circle on account of Barnabas’ track record as a Believer.

Third, Barnabas shared a solid recommendation on Paul’s behalf. Simply put: Barnabas spoke for Paul. I personally imagine Paul remaining quiet as Barnabas shared about how Christ saved Paul and began using him to share the Gospel with others. Everyone might have cast a suspicious eye on Paul if he spoke, but they were willing to listen to Barnabas’ recommendation on Paul’s behalf.

The application of these points to our lives should be clear. First, we should seek to be giving, generous, and gracious in our lives. Of course, we need to maintain a Biblical balance in our lives as well. In other words, sometimes we need to share “tough love” with others. We need to maintain our convictions regardless of what others are doing. But we should always seek to build others up as much as possible and as often as we can as we interact with them.

Second, we should stand up for others as much as possible. When we see someone ostracized and excluded, we should step up to be their advocate. Take action to put your arm around them and introduce them to others. Be the first to include them. Sometimes people act in cold, hard ways because this is what they have experienced from others. If someone would show them love and compassion, God can use that to melt their hearts.



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Third, we should be willing to put our reputation and words behind our actions. Rather than remaining safe in our walls of silence, we should speak up for others. Perhaps God will use our influence to open a door for the plans and desires He has to build another person up in His Kingdom work.

This is how we are called to connect with others for edification. We want to work to see people flourish in God's Kingdom purposes. We want to be a part of God's plan to build them up and use them for His glory and honor.

### 3. Connecting for Equipping (Acts 16:1-5)

Paul was impacted to make an impact. After Christ saved him and God used Barnabas to help build him up as Paul connected with others, Paul also connected with people so that they too could be equipped to serve in God's Kingdom purposes.

In Acts 16:1-5, we read about one person Paul connected with in order to equip him for ministry. His name was Timothy. His mother was a Jewish Believer; his father was a Greek. We also learn further from 2 Timothy 1:5 that both Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice were Believers.

So Paul obviously identified Timothy as a young man he could connect with for equipping in ministry. In order to help posture Timothy for effective service, Paul took Timothy along with him on his missionary journey, and he had Timothy circumcised which improved his opportunities to work among Jews. Later, we read in 1 Timothy 1:3 how Paul urged Timothy to minister in Ephesus as he served in a pastoral leadership role. Of course, just as Paul connected with Timothy to equip him for service, Paul called Timothy to connect with others to equip them for service so they could then connect with others and so on (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

Here we can see at least three points of application for us as we seek to connect with others in order to equip them for service. First, we need to identify people who are ready and willing to serve and help posture them for effective service. We must remember Timothy was already called a "disciple" when Paul met him in Acts 16:1. Timothy had obviously heard the Gospel from his grandmother and mother. So Paul sought to connect with Timothy in such a way that he was simply working in according to God's plan for Timothy. We don't call people to serve; God does. We simply want to join God in His work in people's lives so that Christ can use us for His purposes in the lives of others as they are equipped for effective service.

Second, Paul took Timothy on his missionary journey, had him circumcised, and eventually urged him to serve in a position of leadership. This is a very practical and progressive plan of action. It's practical because it involves helping people take the steps they need to take to become more and more effective in service. Also, it's progressive because Paul didn't place Timothy in a pastoral leadership role from day



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one. Rather, Timothy journeyed with Paul, and doubtlessly, observed Paul in service as he preached, ministered, served, and interacted with others. Through all of this, Timothy learned about effective ministry service. Then, when the time was right, Paul challenged Timothy to serve. While we know Timothy likely struggled with perhaps fear and timidity in his service (1 Timothy 4:12; 5:21; 2 Timothy 1:7), God used the trials Timothy encountered in the trenches of service to help him grow and develop.

Third, Paul helped Timothy realize that he was called to connect with others for equipping in the same way Paul connected with him for equipping. Again, this point is summarized in **2 Timothy 2:1-2** where Paul says, *“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”*

Once again, how these points of application fit Believers today is plain. First, we need to ask God to show us people whom He is calling to serve Him and then connect with them for equipping. We don't want them to follow us; rather, we want to help equip them to follow God.

Second, we need to ask God to help us know how to equip them with a practical and progressive plan. Many times this equipping takes place in small group relationships or one-to-one mentoring relationships. In other words, as we learn together when we study the Scripture, we seek to sharpen one another for service. Also, we can connect with other Believers and take them along with us on our journey so that they can observe ministry in action so that in time they too can serve in ministry leadership roles.

Third, we need to help those we're connecting with for equipping to understand God wants to use them to connect with others who will then connect with others and so on. Jesus called us to make disciples, and in light of this particular point, we can say that Jesus called us to make “disciple-making disciples.” We need to help people understand that they are not the last link in the chain of God's work; they are simply the next link! God wants to use them also to help people come to know Christ through evangelism, be edified in their personal walk with the Lord, and equipped for service!

### **Conclusion:**

As we can see from above, God has saved us to make an impact for His glory, and we need to ask Him to fill us with the power of His Spirit to connect with others for His Kingdom purposes of evangelism, edification, and equipping so that His name is praised throughout all the earth. Pray for God to give you insight to see all the people around you that He wants you to connect with for His Kingdom. If you don't know Christ, turn to Him and trust Him by God's grace today to save you through His death, burial, and resurrection! Then you can begin your journey of connecting with others for His Kingdom!