

## Navigating the New Normal Study Guide



- Week One: The Loss of Control
- **Week Two: The Loss of Connection**
- Week Three: The Loss of Certainty
- Week Four: The Loss of Celebration
- Week Five: The Loss of Confidence

This week's study will cover the reality that we have lost a sense of connection with others during this season of "shelter in place." But what if there are other ways to connect if we will be creative enough to discover them? Whether you are with a group or doing this study as an individual, please follow along with the daily devotionals and weekly reflection questions.

## How to Use the Materials

### For Individuals:

- Watch the service.
- Do the five-day S.O.A.P. devotional - Begin the Monday following the weekend message. (Use a journal or the space provided and a modern translation of the Bible.)
- Share with someone something meaningful you have learned during the week.

### With a Group:

Prior to your small group meeting, group members will:

- Watch the service.
- Begin the five-day S.O.A.P. devotional - Use a journal, or the space provided on the guide, and a Bible. Start on Monday following the weekend message.
- Be prepared and ready to share thoughts from the weekend message.

### When your group meets, group members will:

- Use the weekly Small Group Discussion Guide.
- Share: Members will share thoughts from the weekend message; daily devotionals serve as a supplement to the discussion.
- Pray: Be sure to reserve at least 20-minutes for prayer time.
- Encourage Group engagement: Attend the next weekend service, download and begin that week's study guide on Monday. Come back prepared to share.

## Day One: Cruising

Whether it is seasonings in cooking or words when you're angry, sometimes "less is more." But there are also situations when "more is better." Attempting to play Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" with one lone musician misses out on the richness of the rest of the orchestra. Attempting to win the world series with one player won't work, you need the whole team. The same applies to life. We are simply better together. In fact, we are wired by God for that exact purpose.

No one is born a "lone wolf"—actually, the exact opposite is true. We are born with deep needs to feel safe and loved. Infants that fail to bond or connect with their mother or substitute caregiver can be plagued by a lifetime of emotional and relational struggles. These children can develop attachment disorders that make handling the necessary emotional and relational connections of life difficult at best, and, often, seemingly impossible.

Being made in the image of God means, in part, that we are wired for deep, relational connections. The Trinity of Father, Son and Spirit has been described as a continual dance of service and love. When the world was created, it was very good. The first "not good" of Scripture was that man was alone and nothing but one like him would satisfy. Put simply, we were made for community.

**Read Genesis 2:18-24.** How does this passage reveal God's original intent for community and connectedness?



**Daily  
Devotion**

**S (Scripture)** - Write out a phrase or passage that really stuck out to you today.

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**O (Observation)** - What do you notice about this phrase/passage? Who is speaking? What are some words or images that stick out to you?

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**A (Application)** - How do you think God is calling you to understand and apply this phrase/passage? Is there a challenge to accept? A warning to observe? A blessing to receive? How will understanding this passage change your daily life?

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**P (Prayer)** - Write a prayer to God thanking him for the idea and example of community. Thank him for the blessing of the rich relationships in your life or ask for him to bring you relationships that can be full and satisfying.

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**Prayer**

While we are wired for community and connection, there are times when both seem impossible—for instance, a global pandemic that requires every household to “shelter in place” for an undetermined period of time. This means, for many, a lack of face-to-face contact, a loss of physical touch, and the threats of loneliness, depression and anxiety that come from isolation.



In the face of disconnection, we will find ways to cope that are not always healthy and often make the situation worse. Numbing, or the act of completely losing touch with the real world by subjecting yourself to mindless, wasteful activity, is on the rise. Countless hours are spent scrolling social media or gaming. Shopping online for unnecessary items is seen as the antidote to boredom. Rather than thoughtful engagement with those quarantined alongside us or physical activity, we settle for disengagement and isolation and just hope that it will make us somehow feel better.

**S (Scripture)** - Write out a phrase or passage that really stuck out to you today.

**O (Observation)** - What do you notice about this phrase/passage? Who is speaking? Who is listening? What are some words or images that stick out to you?

**A (Application)** - How do you think God is calling you to apply this phrase/passage? Is there a challenge to accept? A warning to observe? A blessing to receive? How will your daily life change if you apply it?

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**P (Prayer)** - Write a prayer to God naming the connections you have lost due to the COVID-19 virus. Tell him how you feel right now and ask him to help you process your feelings of loss. Thank him for his ability to bring us an abundant and full life even against the reality of loss.



Prayer

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## Day Three: Roadside Assistance

God knows that we need deep connection. He also knows that reality sometimes makes physical connection a problem. And so, out of his abundant goodness, God designed it so that our innate need for meaningful relationships can be met emotionally even if not physically. Science shows that the physical effects of loneliness are kept at bay as long as we *feel* connected.



The apostle Paul's favorite way of describing the relationship between a believer and God was by using the phrase "in Christ." Throughout his New Testament letters, Paul repeatedly calls out to believers to recognize their new standing before God as being found within their relationship and connection to Jesus Christ. Whatever their physical reality, there was a deeper, everlasting truth that "in Christ," God would meet their every need.

Yes, we have temporarily lost the physical interactions that helped us feel connected to others. Hugs and handshakes may no longer be possible. But the love of the Father in Christ Jesus can never be taken from us. We can use this season to draw close to the One who is reaching out for us. Nothing, even COVID-19, can separate us from his love.

**Read Romans 8:38-39.** How does this passage relate to your current reality?

**S (Scripture)** - Write out a phrase or passage that really stuck out to you today.

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**O (Observation)** - What do you notice about this phrase/passage? What is going on in the world of the writer? What are some words or images that stick out to you?

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**A (Application)** - How do you think God is calling you to apply this phrase/passage? Is there a challenge to accept? A warning to observe? A blessing to receive? How will your daily life change if you apply it?

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**P (Prayer)** - Write a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God. Even if it is in faith because you don't currently feel it, thank him that nothing, including COVID-19, can separate you from his love that is greater than life. Ask him to help you feel his sustaining love for you today and always.



Prayer

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## Day Four: Recalculating

The characteristics, or attributes of God, are sometimes referred to as the “omnis.” God is *omnipotent*, or all-powerful, and we can therefore trust him to take care of our every need. He is *omniscient*, or all-knowing, and we can therefore take deep comfort in the truth that his love for us is genuine because he knows everything about us and loves us still as his prized possession.



Daily  
Devotion

He is also *omnipresent*, or always present. The omnipresence of God means that he is with us every moment of every day. We need not fear, because he is with us. Over and over, Scripture challenges the people of God to be strong and courageous because the Lord their God is with them. He is with you, too. Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, God is with us still, comforting us and bringing us peace.

In the midst of the uncertainty and confusion of COVID-19, we don't have to let fear rule our actions and choices. Courage isn't the absence of fear but the decision to act in the face of

fear. God is asking his people to be salt and light during this time through an example of peace. It won't make sense to the rest of the world, but your peace may be game changing in the life of someone else.

**Read Joshua 1:9.** How does God's omnipresence comfort you?

**S (Scripture)** - Write out a phrase or passage that really stuck out to you today.

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**O (Observation)** - What do you notice about this phrase/passage? What is going on in the world of the writer? What are some words or images that stick out to you?

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**A (Application)** - How do you think God is calling you to apply this phrase/passage? Is there a challenge to accept? A warning to observe? A blessing to receive? How will your daily life change if you apply it?

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**P (Prayer)** - Write a prayer to God expressing your fears. Ask him to give you his courage so that you may live an example of peace in the midst of crisis. Thank him for his omniscience that knows all of your needs and his omnipotence to meet them. Thank him for his omnipresence and constant connection to you even when you are feeling isolated from others.



Prayer

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## Day Five: On the Road Again

When we are feeling vulnerable, the tendency is to withdraw rather than engage. We pull back rather than lean in. We circle the wagons and protect "me and mine." What if this was an opportunity to do the exact opposite? What if this is a time in our world's history to embrace new ways of connecting that we haven't explored before... or at least in a long while? What if this loss of connection, in one way, is an opportunity to connect differently?



Daily Devotion

"It's a small world, after all" is more than a song that burrows its way into your brain. It's a saying proven truer everyday through technology. While we are currently disconnected physically, never before have we had as much connective opportunity as we do now. Social media, Zoom calls and FaceTime, oh my! Multiple platforms exist and are popping up every day to help us maintain those connections that mean the most to us. And don't forget the power of a handwritten letter and stamp!

Isolation kills. Science proves that the consequences of isolation can shorten your lifespan. So, feel your feelings. Don't stuff them. But don't stew in them either. Rather than withdraw, reach out. Lean in. Get creative with ways to stay connected to God and others. Life is sacred and time is short, regardless of our world's circumstances—maybe even more so *in light* of them. Spend this day in ways that matter to you. We are still better together.

**Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.**

**S (Scripture)** - Write out a phrase or passage that really stuck out to you today.

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**O (Observation)** - What do you notice about this prayer?  
What are some words or images that stick out to you?

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**A (Application)** - How do you think God is calling you to apply this phrase/passage? Is there a challenge to accept? A warning to observe? A blessing to receive? How will your daily life change if you apply it?

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**P (Prayer)** - Write a prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God. Thank him even for such a time as this. Name a few of the blessings you are experiencing even as you recognize the losses that hurt. Ask his Spirit to give you the courage and creativity to refuse to isolate but rather to engage with others, to stay connected, and find a life of meaning and value during this season.



## Prayer

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## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Welcome

**Opening Prayer** - Invite God's presence into your group time. Thank him for the gift of fellowship and ask him for insights, creativity, and reminders of his love.

**Group Sharing** - Share (from what you've written) something that has been meaningful to you from your last few days of devotionals.



### Discussion Guide:

#### Cruising

What does it mean to you to be "better together"?

How has your life been impacted by teamwork and connection with other people?

#### Breakdown

What do you miss most about connecting in person with other people?

Have you ever experienced "numbing"? What is your "mindless" activity of choice?

#### Roadside Assistance

What does it mean to you for followers of Jesus to be "in Christ"?

How can being "in Christ" impact your feelings during this season?

### Recalculating

Which of the "omnis" means the most to you right now (God as all powerful, all knowing or always present?)

How can you get creative with technology to stay connected with others who are important to you?

How can we still be "better together" when we are isolated physically from one another?

**On the Road Again** - Spend some time in concentrated prayer using the acronym P.R.A.Y.

**Praise** - Praise God for who he is and what he has done.

**Repent** - Recognize where you need to turn from unhealthy or destructive thinking and patterns and turn back to God's way of life.

**Ask** - Ask for God's intervention on your behalf and that of others.

**Yield** - Entrust your requests to God's good and perfect response and timing.

