

CARE

CONNECTIONS MODULE #3

COMPETENCY: Demonstrate care for individuals and groups with intention and kindness, which seeks to help others develop confidence in God and the space to discover their unique giftedness. After completing the assignments below, meet with your trainer and cohort to discuss what you learned. You will gain a holistic understanding of caring for yourself and others. Furthermore, it will provide a space for you to discover your giftedness for the betterment of the self, the church community, and beyond.

Opening Questions:

1. Who is someone you know that cares for others well?
 2. What qualities do they display in their care for others?
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ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Read scripture, John 15:1-12, and answer provided questions.

Assignment 2: **Read this article by Jan Johnson, [click here to download and read.](#)**

OPTIONAL

Assignment 3: Take a few times to read through John 15:1-12, in a quiet place, close your eyes and the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Then read the passage aloud again and sit quietly for a while. What do you believe God is saying to you that you need to hear?

Assignment 4: Take one specific thing you gained from the Article or the Scripture and apply it personally in your interaction with someone to show care?

ASSIGNMENT 1

John 15:1-12

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you in the section of Scripture?
2. Where do you see care beginning from in the section of Scripture?
3. How can you care better for yourself? How do you think that will flow towards others?
4. What can help you move towards abiding in Christ?

ASSIGNMENT 2

Change is **CAUGHT** more than **TAUGHT**

Late in his life, Dallas Willard said that the missing ingredient in spiritual formation is obedience. He was careful to say that willpower—deciding to obey—would never be enough. Why? Because we get ourselves in a tricky situation and obedience doesn't seem like the smart thing to do. Like the little girl in Sunday school who when asked what a lie is, replied, "A lie is an abomination to God and a very present help in time of trouble." She saw the value of walking around the truth instead of standing in it.

So how does obedience work?

Decades ago when I was in a strict Christian college, we had a curfew that I pretended didn't exist. I'd been raised in a strict home and now that I was in college I was in what kids now call "jailbreak" mode. Otherwise, I was a good student and I traveled for the school in an official way. I was a puzzle to the administration and my very down-to-earth dorm mom. She was a sweet lady who one time when I was late had been sitting on the porch in tears watching for me. She was afraid something bad had happened to me. I was unfazed. So then—get ready!—I was—"campused"! That meant I had to stay in my room for an entire weekend. Food was slid under the door, the whole thing. I thought about reforming but it just wasn't in me.

Then I had a teenage crisis that seemed like the end of the world. My boyfriend dumped me. I didn't want to live—you know how it is when you're 19. I came rushing through the dorm lobby in tears when that insightful dorm mom stopped me and invited me to come into her family's apartment. I spilled out my heart. She sympathized with me. She told me stories about a similar crisis she'd been through. I was shocked. I was sure she had never told another soul what she told me. I cried in her arms.

After that, I was never late. It wasn't that I decided not to be late. It was organic, so to speak. I looked at my watch and was careful to be in on time.

I was at a stage in my life where certain rules didn't matter. Agreements I made with the dean didn't matter. But relationships mattered. After that talk with my dorm mom, there was no way I was ever going to be anyone other than the young woman she knew I could be.

For many Christians, doing good things—not cheating, working hard, going out of their way to help others—are standards they find impossible. They try, thinking that God keeps a list of their good and bad deeds. But Jesus is very clear that this is a relationship: Come to me, learn from me, follow me, abide in me. Sit on the park bench with me and pour out your heart. It's a relationship. And when we have an actual relationship with Jesus, we find that we more naturally obey. Why? We become like the people we love.

I see John 15:4ff as the model: We abide in Christ. We get to know Christ. We experience Christ. We are so enamored with Christ that we begin to think the way he behaved was really savvy, very cool. (See ch 1 of Invitation to the Jesus Life).

This results in our bearing fruit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, meekness, gentleness and self-control. It's not so much that we're trying to do those things, but that we catch them from Jesus. I'm trying this out in a new way this weekend. I've designed a new retreat called, "A Fresh Look at Jesus." I take retreat participants into passages of Scripture and let them experience Jesus. I don't then tell them they should behave like Jesus. I describe a bit what it does and doesn't look like to be like him but I don't urge them to do it. My goal is to have them "fall in love with" Jesus, if you will. To be fascinated by him, to want to sit on the park bench and talk for hours, to go on adventures with Jesus they'd never have to the courage to do otherwise. This seems to open up avenues for the Holy Spirit to woo and work in surprising ways.

Spiritual formation is, I believe, more caught than taught. I'm guessing that some of the participants will catch the love and goodness and adventure of Jesus by experiencing him this way. That's what moves me toward obedience more than anything else.

Grace and peace,
Jan Johnson

QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you in the article?
2. What challenged you and/or encouraged you?
3. What do you believe you can practically apply from the article?

OPTIONAL:

Assignment 3: Take a few times to read through John 15:1-12, in a quiet place, close your eyes and the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Then read the passage aloud again and sit quietly for a while. What do you believe God is saying to you that you need to hear?

Assignment 4: Take one specific thing you gained from the Article or the Scripture and apply it personally in your interaction with someone to show care?

Key Takeaways for the team

As we care for ourselves by abiding in Christ through spiritual disciplines that help us remain attentive to the Spirit of God we will naturally care for others in ways that reflect Christ.