

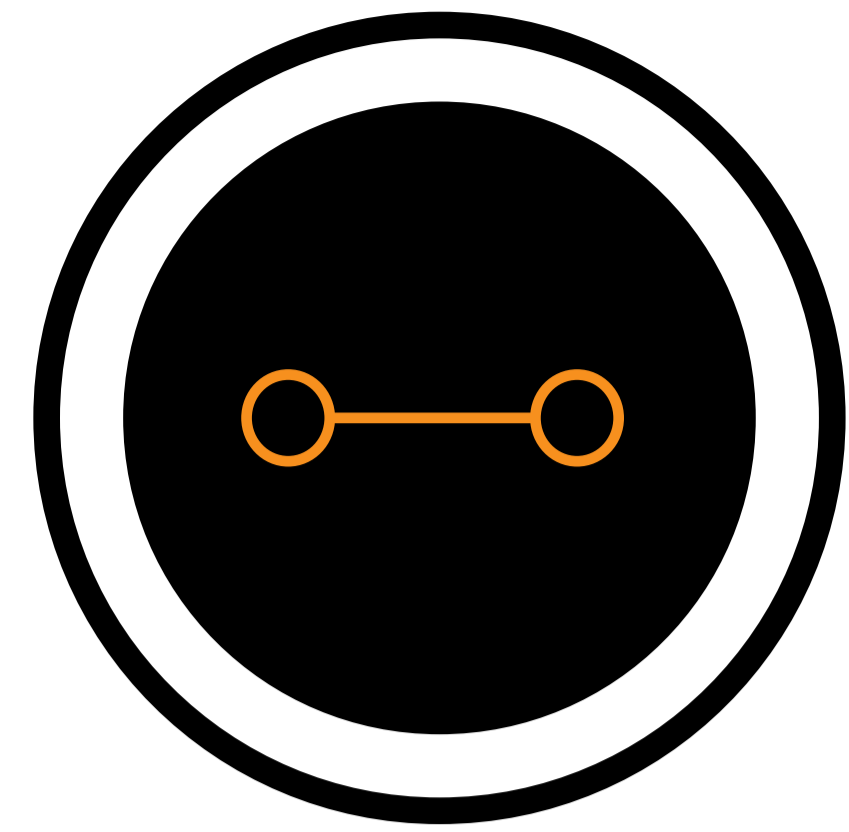


Feed



Social Media & My Community

LESSON 2



LEADER PREPARATION

Dear Small Group Leader:

What shapes our identities? We don't become who we are on our own. God created us to be relational, and our communities play a vital role in shaping us. More and more, people are turning to social media for a sense of community. While it has its upside, it can never replace true community: people united in Christ, loving sacrificially, and communicating face-to-face.

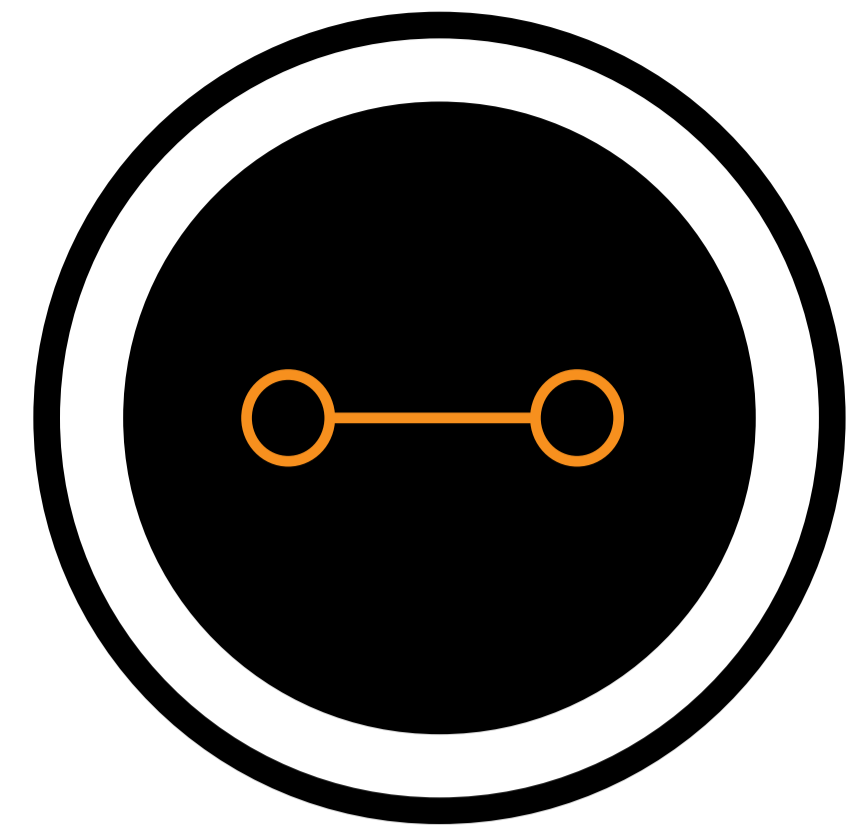
In today's lesson, you and your students will contrast online community with true community, and examine how God wants to use meaningful relationships to shape our identities into his image.

Scripture References

- 2 John

Lesson Objectives

1. Students will discuss the markers of a healthy church.



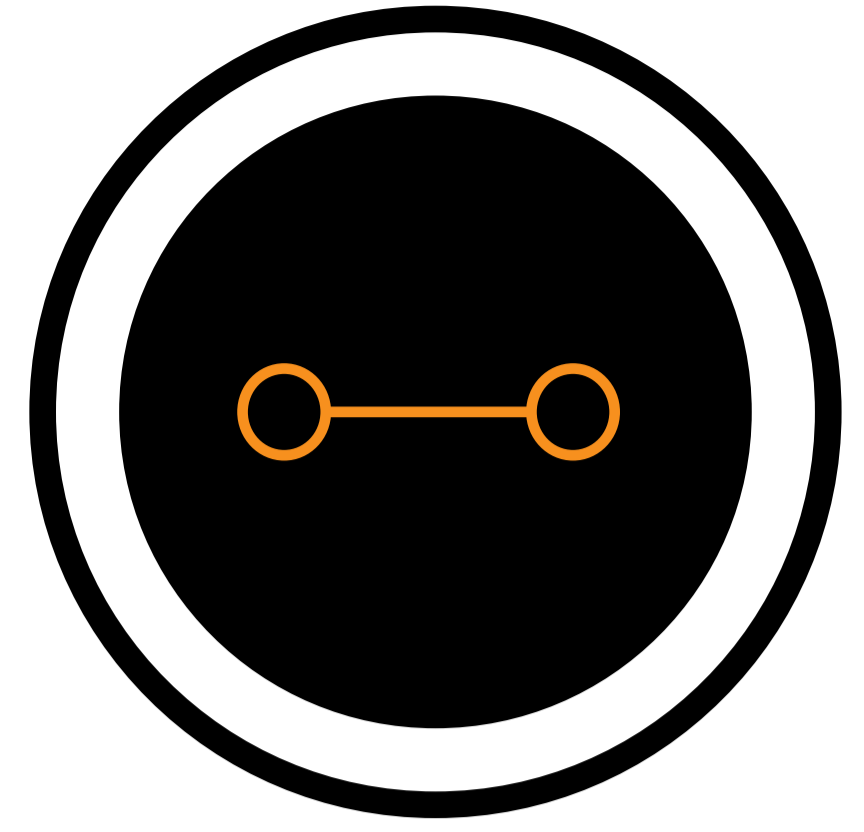
2. Students will recognize how our relationships, including our church and social media relationships, influence our identity.
3. Students will reflect on the importance of belonging to an authentic, face-to-face community.

Main Point

Because your identity is shaped by those around you, make sure you are in a community characterized by God's truth, love, grace, and peace.

Helpful Hints

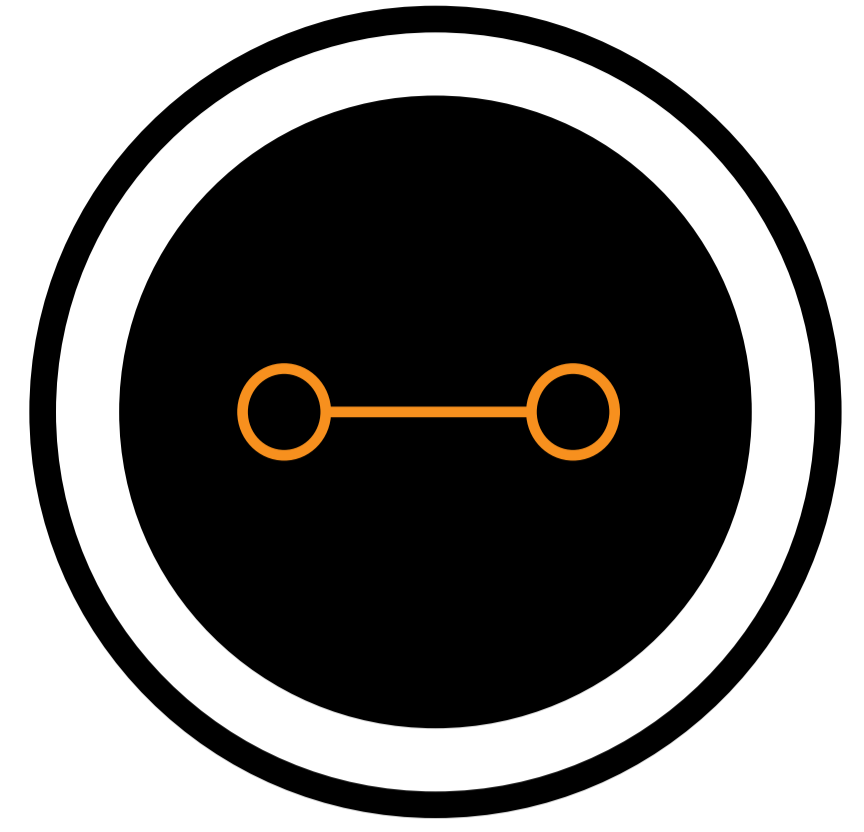
- While you might not have experienced it personally, online communities can provide a powerful source of belonging, validation, and learning for some of your students. Be careful not to minimize the positive impact that social media can have on their lives. Validate the good ways in which your students engage online and be open to hearing the upside of social media.



- As you explain the idea of healthy community among followers of Jesus, recognize that some of your students may have experienced unhealthy church culture and been hurt as a result. While no church is perfect here on earth, we can look forward to experiencing perfect community one day in heaven.

Materials Needed

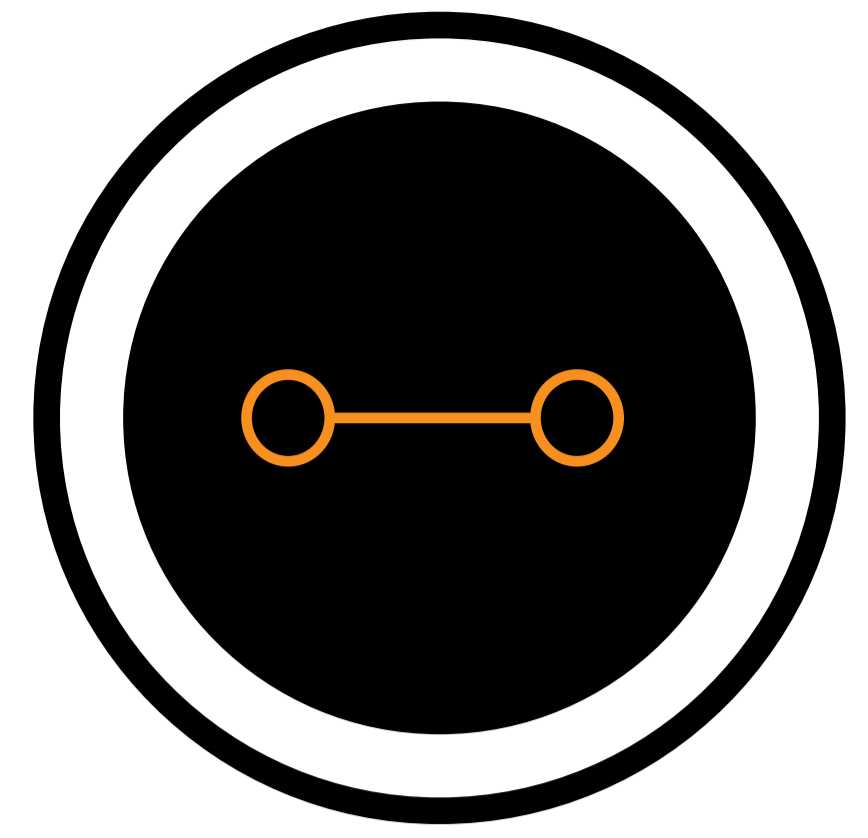
- Bible
- Laptop or TV with an internet connection to show videos



#WESAY

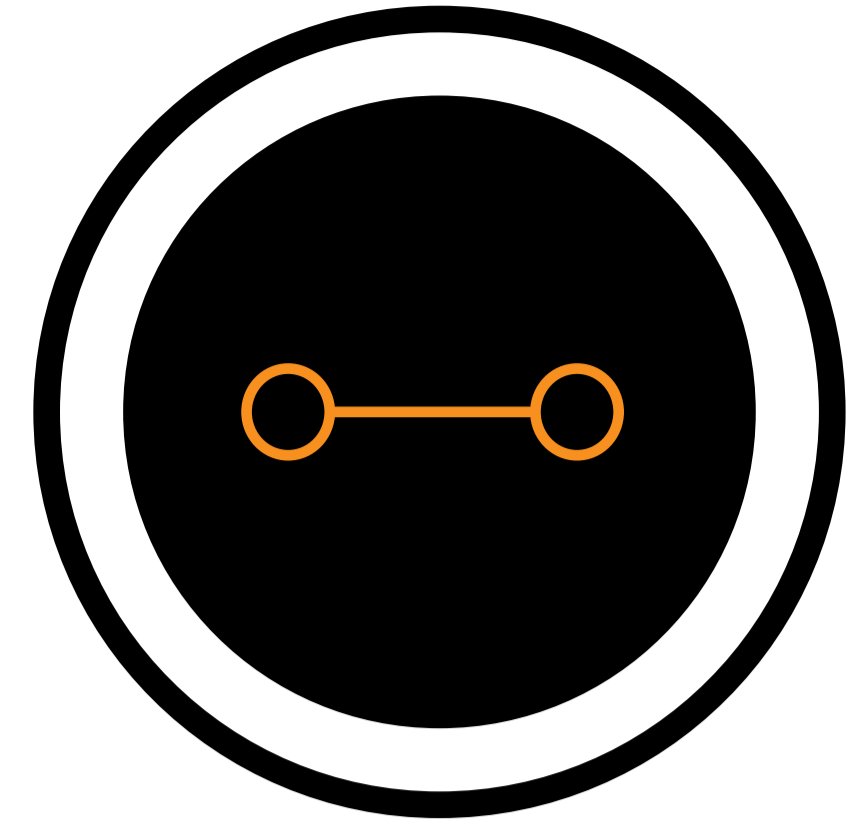
The group will tell a story in which each person contributes a portion. No one person will shape the story. It will come from the community.

- Give the group a list of genres to choose from:
 - Mystery
 - Adventure
 - Science Fiction
 - Horror
 - Romance
- Have the group stand in a circle. Choose one person to begin. They will say one sentence by beginning with, “Once upon a time...”
- The next person in the group will continue the story by adding the “problem” saying, “...but they couldn’t because...”
- The next several people will add a sentence by beginning with, “So they...”; “Because of that...”; or “That meant...”



- The next to last person in the circle will begin their sentence with, “Until finally...”
- The last person in the circle will begin their sentence with, “And ever since then...”

Play several rounds using the different genres. Each round starts at a new place in the circle. End saying something like, “Our communities shape our story. Whom you surround yourself with will have a big impact on your thoughts and actions toward God, others, and yourself.”



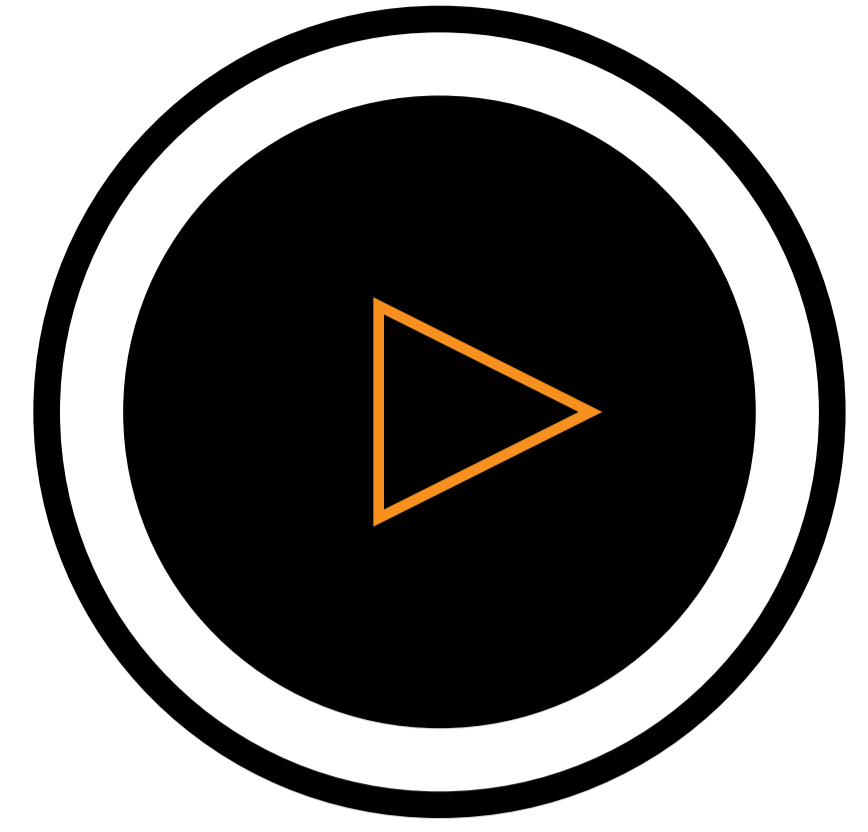
Say: Last week, we explored the idea of our identity being a process in which we become more like Jesus. But how exactly does that happen? We know that the Holy Spirit works within us to sanctify us, and we also know that God uses others to help us grow in holiness. Today we're going to talk about the importance of belonging to a community and explore how social media both helps and hinders our identity formation.

Ask students to consider the following questions while they watch the video:

Question 1: What are some differences between online communities and in-person communities?

Question 2: What's the difference between a local church and the uppercase-C Church?

VIDEO (10 MINUTES)



PLAY VIDEO



Show the Lesson 2 video to the large group. After the video is complete, **ask** the following questions:

Question 1: As you were thinking about the questions asked before the video, what stood out to you?

Question 2: What are some positive and negative ways you've seen social media affect your life?

Question 3: Have you ever experienced the true community described in the video?

Question 4: How do you feel after spending time online? What do these emotions tell you about the role social media is playing in your life?



Direct students into their small groups.

Read the following passages of Scripture with your students.

Say: Today we're going to be reading the entire book of 2 John. The book of 2 John is a short but powerful letter written to a group of believers whose community was in danger of being ripped apart. Though this community once experienced total unity in their belief in Jesus, certain members wandered away. They adopted the false teachings and philosophies of their culture and brought those ideas back to the church. John heard about what was happening and wrote to encourage this group to protect their genuine, Christ-centered community. You're going to hear John emphasize the most important aspects of authentic Christian community: truth and love. He then warns against threats to that healthy community.

You'll hear John refer to the church as "The chosen lady and her children," and you'll get the sense that John wants to protect his spiritual family and preserve their love for Jesus and each other.



This letter is from John, the elder.

I am writing to the **chosen lady and to her children, whom I love in the truth**—as does everyone else who knows the truth— 2 because the truth lives in us and will be with us forever.

3 Grace, mercy, and peace, which come from God the Father and from Jesus Christ—the Son of the Father—will continue to be with us **who live in truth and love.**

4 How happy I was to meet some of your children and find them **living according to the truth, just as the Father commanded.**

5 I am writing to remind you, dear friends, that **we should love one another.** This is not a new commandment, but one we have had from the beginning. 6 **Love means doing what God has commanded us,** and he has commanded us



to love one another, just as you heard from the beginning.

7 I say this because many deceivers have gone out into the world. **They deny that Jesus Christ came in a real body.** Such a person is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8 Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked so hard to achieve. Be diligent so that you receive your full reward. 9 **Anyone who wanders away from this teaching has no relationship with God. But anyone who remains in the teaching of Christ has a relationship with both the Father and the Son.**

10 If anyone comes to your meeting and does not teach the truth about Christ, don't invite that person into your home or give any kind of encouragement. 11 **Anyone who encourages such people becomes a partner in their evil work.**



12 I have much more to say to you, but I don't want to do it with paper and ink. For I hope to visit you soon and talk with you face to face. Then our joy will be complete.

13 Greetings from the children of your sister, chosen by God.

OPEN IN BIBLE APP



Say: Notice how John describes the identity of the church as a family. They, like Jesus, are children of their Father, God. They aren't just people who *know* the truth. Truth actually *lives* in them (verse 2) and they, together, live in truth. As they live in this union with the truth about Christ, that truth shapes and forms them into a community of love. They all help each other become more like Jesus by striving to live and love like Jesus did.

Now notice the way John describes the effect of the deceivers on this community. These deceitful people used to be members of the community, but they left the church to go out into the world. They picked up the world's ways of thinking, believing, and behaving, and they were trying to bring those ways back into the church. As a result, the unity and truth of the church was under threat. If the community lost sight of the truth about Christ, it would become very difficult for them to become *like Christ* in their individual and communal identities.



Ask students the following questions.

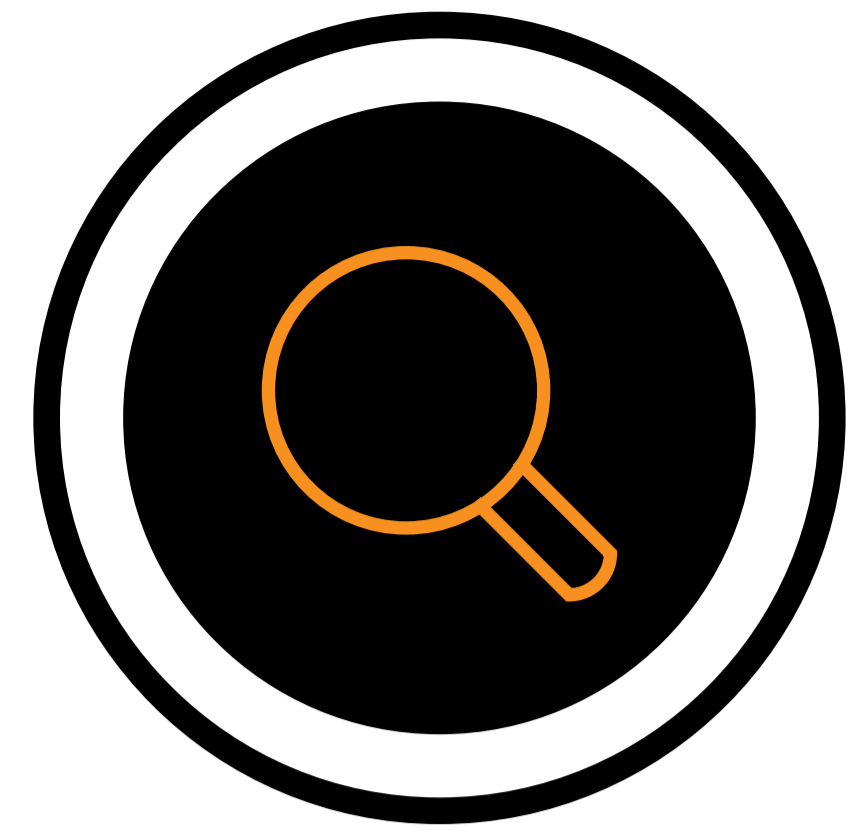
Question 1: What were some of the key words John uses to describe a healthy church?

Question 2: What does it mean for a Christian community to “live in truth and love”? Why do you think truth is so essential to an authentic community?

Question 3: What were the deceivers doing? How were they threatening the identity of the church community?

Question 4: What’s the difference between false teaching and asking questions about Jesus?

Question 5: What makes face-to-face communication more meaningful than writing?



Ask students the following questions.

Question 1: What qualities and practices do you think are important for an ideal community of Christians to include? How could belonging to a community like this help you grow in your identity as a Christian?

Question 2: We are exposed to more ideas and philosophies today than ever before. What are some ways you can determine what's true and what's not?

Question 3: What are some ways that social media has influenced your identity, positively or negatively?

Question 4: Our culture tends to emphasize feelings and emotions over truth and obedience. How do you think this has affected you and the way you interact with others?

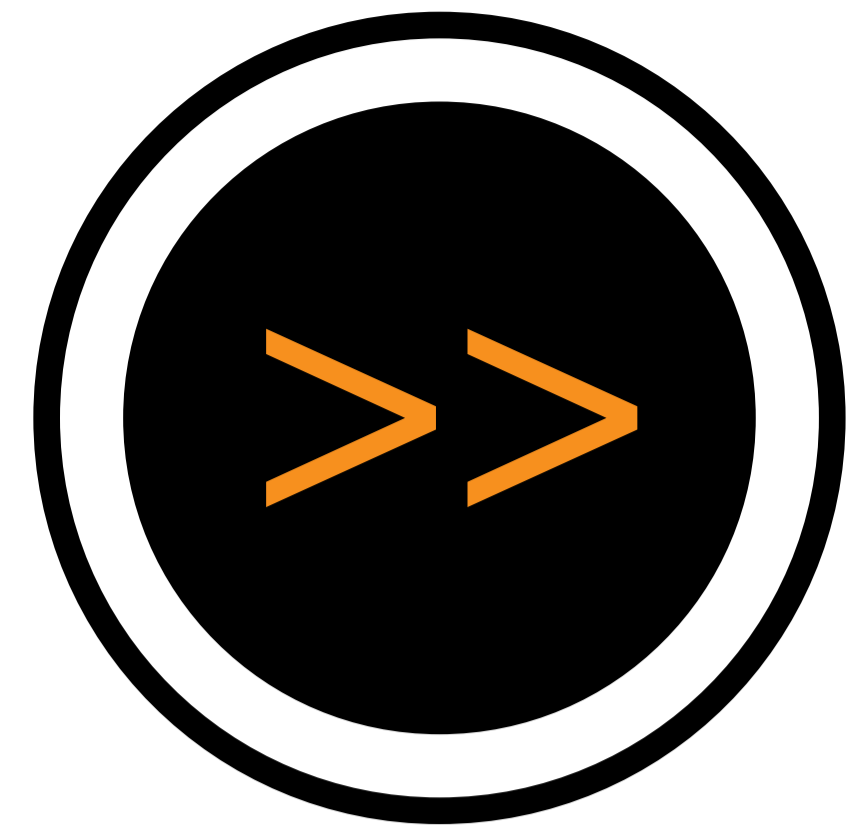
Question 5: John reminds us of God's command to love one another. Do you find this is easier or harder to do on social media? Why?



Suggestion: If you're able to bring the small groups back together into a large group, do so at this time. Alternatively, this activity and the remaining activities can also take place in small groups. Share the following Catechism question and answer with the students.

Question: How should we live together as the Church?

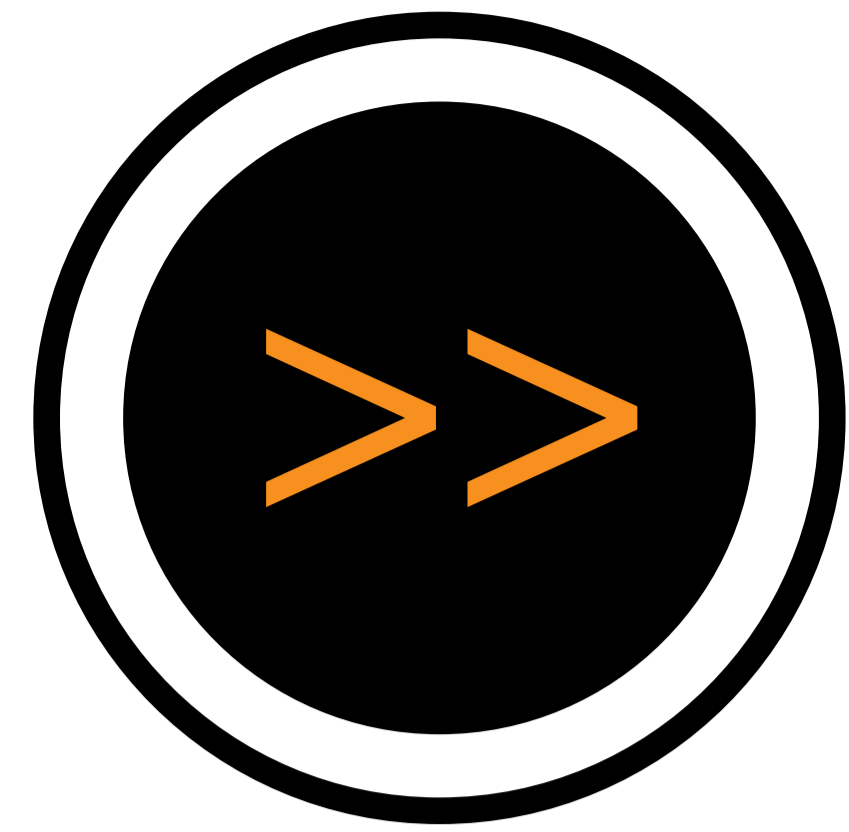
Answer: Christ commands us to love one another through meeting together regularly, serving each other's needs, and strengthening each other's faith in Christ by exercising the gifts of the Spirit.



Say: God doesn't shape our identities in isolation. He designed us to flourish in the context of community. Healthy, godly communities have their foundation in the truth, are marked by love for one another, and are best experienced face-to-face. Though social media offers many benefits, it can never replace authentic Christian community. God wants you to experience the joy of belonging to a community that serves him and serves one another. He wants to use those relationships to shape your image into his own.

Give students time to reflect and respond on their own, either on paper or in the Notes app on their phones.

- We all want to belong or feel at home in a place where we are loved and accepted. But the foundation for authentic community is both love and truth, uniting around belief in Jesus. Where do you most feel a sense of belonging? Do those

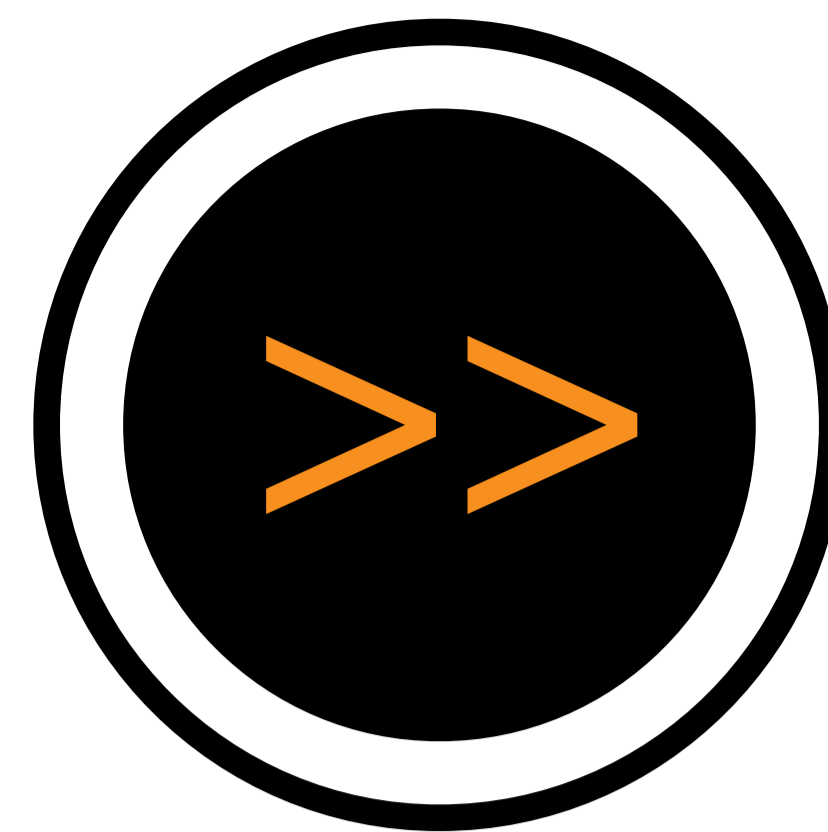


people share a love for the truth? Or is your sense of belonging based on something else? Ask God to give you a love for the truth of the gospel and for him to bring you Christian communities and face-to-face friendships that draw you closer to him.

- Think about how you feel after scrolling social media. Do you feel encouraged? Comforted? Motivated to follow Jesus? Or does social media leave you feeling isolated, alone, doubtful, and confused? Ask God to give you wisdom about how much time you spend in front of a screen and ask him to show you the effect it's having on your heart, soul, and mind. Consider replacing some of your social media time with face-to-face interactions and conversations.

Close in Prayer

End this time together by praying over your students.



YouVersion Reading Plan

Before you go... We've included a three-day YouVersion Reading Plan to engage students further in the conversation and close the gap between next week's lesson. Invite your students to download the plan and complete it this week. It can be found by searching for "Catechism: Social Media & My Community" in the Bible App's collection of reading plans.





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