

# A PRESENT PEOPLE

—WEEK 5—

We are more connected to the world than any other time in history. Yet, loneliness is an epidemic and anxiety is at an all-time high. We have so much technology to connect us to one another. Yet, we have never been more distracted. We can have a thousand friends on Facebook. And yet, no one in our life may even know us at all.

Think about your daily life. How much time do you spend looking at your cell phone? How soon do you have to check your phone when you wake up? How often are you checking social media or a sports score? How often do you miss your spouse, your kid, your co-worker, your friend, or the barista standing right in front of you?

As God's people, we should be the most present people on the planet.

We should be the most present people because of Jesus and because of his grace. Jesus left the throne room of heaven to be present among sinners. Just read through the gospels, Jesus never missed who was right in front of him. Jesus was always engaged, always present, always ready to speak, always ready to love in the moment.

**Our Church Covenant reads: "We will rejoice at one another's happiness and, with tenderness and sympathy, bear one another's burdens and sorrows."**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor of the 20th century says this, "The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love for God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. It is God's love for us that He not only gives us His Word but also lends us His ear. So it is His work that we do for our brother when we learn to listen to him."

Bonhoeffer goes on to say, "Many people are looking for an ear that will listen." Will we be the type of church where people can always find someone who will listen? Or will we be like the rest of the world staring at our screens?

There will be moms who long to rejoice over the grace they see in their kids. There will be men who want to rejoice at what God is teaching them. There will be college students who want to rejoice over sharing the gospel with a classmate. There will be a couple who wants to rejoice over two lines on a pregnancy test. Will we be there to listen?

There will be fathers who need to weep over their child who says they don't believe Jesus is real anymore. There will be older couples who need to weep over losing a loved one. There will be ladies who need to weep over a newly found disease on a medical test. There will be a young man who needs someone to weep with him as he longs for the day for his struggles with sin to be no more. Will we be there to listen?

But we don't just settle for listening. We must do whatever we can to carry the burden with others. Jesus joyfully carried our greatest burden of sin and nailed it to the cross. Let's joyfully carry the burdens of one another for as long as it takes, so that our brothers and sisters know that they are not alone.

Meditate on God's Word

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." —Matthew 11:28-30

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." —Romans 12:15

"We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up."  
—Romans 15:1-2

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." —Galatians 6:2

Questions for Application

1. How do you see the world around you distracted these days? What about your own life? How do you see yourself distracted from being present and actively listening?
2. What are some powerful testimonies in our church family where you have been able to "rejoice with those who rejoice" or "weep with those who weep"?
3. Why do we often fall short of really bearing one another's burdens in the church? What more can we do to love in a sacrificial way like Christ?

Close by praying as a group that we would grow in being present, grow in listening, and even grow in selflessly bearing one another's burdens together.