

Devotional Guide

May 4-9, 2026



Genuinely Connected

Strangers Become Family

Speaker: Mike Kleven, Lead Pastor

The message explores how the deep human need to belong collides with an epidemic of loneliness—even in familiar communities. Pastor Mike shares his own contrasting experiences of feeling instantly at home at FBC Falun versus feeling like an outsider at a local restaurant. Drawing from songs about loneliness and Mother Teresa’s insight that “the most terrible poverty is loneliness,” the sermon shows that genuine connections in a God-centered church are God’s antidote. Jesus’ commands—love God fully, love your neighbor as yourself, and love one another as He loved us—flow vertical love into horizontal action. The Golden Rule makes love proactive, practical, and comprehensive. When lived out, strangers become family and the isolated discover their true home in Jesus.

How to Use This Guide:

Set aside 10-15 minutes daily. Read the Bible, reflect on the thought, answer questions, pray, and take the action step. Commit to this for growth—journal insights and share with a friend for accountability.

Day 1: The Epidemic of Loneliness and Our Need to Belong

Bible Reading: Psalm 68:6, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

The sermon opened with Pastor Mike’s story of his first Sunday feeling like he had “come home” contrasted with a painful moment of isolation at a restaurant. Mother Teresa’s words about loneliness as the most terrible poverty, reveal how widespread this struggle is.

Even in familiar places, many feel like outsiders. Yet the church—filled with faithful Jesus followers—is God’s antidote. The big idea reminds us: When we love like Jesus loved us, the lonely and isolated can find their true home. Small compromises toward isolation invite loneliness, but genuine connection begins when we notice and welcome others. Reflect on where you’ve felt out of place and how Jesus invites you into belonging.

Reflection Questions:

1. What does the sermon’s restaurant story reveal about the universal need to belong?
2. Where have you recently felt like an outsider?
3. How do the Bible passages describe God’s heart for the lonely?
4. What small step could you take to help someone feel noticed?
5. How does the big idea give you hope for your own story?

Prayer Prompt: Lord, thank You for creating us for connection. Forgive where I’ve withdrawn. Open my eyes to those who feel alone. Help me be part of the solution. Amen.

Action Step: Text or call one person you haven’t connected with in a while and simply say, “I’m glad you’re part of my life.”

Day 2: Love for God Flows into Love for Others

Bible Reading: Matthew 22:37-40, 1 John 4:19-21

Jesus declared that loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind is the first and greatest commandment, and the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself. The sermon used the powerful image of a cup versus a funnel—God’s blessings are never meant to be hoarded but to flow through us to others. Vertical love for God always pours out horizontally. Many try to fill their own cup and wonder why they still feel empty.

The big idea—When we love like Jesus loved us, the lonely and isolated can find their true home—shifts us from self-focused living to funnel-like generosity. In daily life, this means letting God’s love overflow into our families, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

Reflection Questions:

1. What does Matthew 22:37-40 teach about the relationship between loving God and loving others?
2. Where in your life do you tend to live more like a “cup” than a “funnel”?
3. How does 1 John 4:19-21 challenge us?
4. What would it look like to let God’s love flow through you today?
5. How does the big idea change your view of daily interactions?

Prayer Prompt: Father, fill me with Your love so it overflows to those around me. Make me a funnel of blessing. Amen.

Action Step: Perform one act of kindness today with no expectation of return—pay for someone’s coffee, help a neighbor, or send an encouraging note.

Day 3: The Golden Rule in Action

Bible Reading: Matthew 7:12, Philippians 2:3-4

Jesus gave clear direction: “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.” The sermon emphasized that this is not a passive “don’t do bad things” rule but a proactive, practical, comprehensive call to action. It turns love into mercy, honesty, and generosity in every situation.

The big idea reminds us that when we love like Jesus loved us, the lonely and isolated can find their true home. In school hallways, workplaces, or family rooms, the Golden Rule changes how we speak, listen, and serve. It aligns us with what it truly means to be God’s people.

Reflection Questions:

1. What stands out to you about the wording of Matthew 7:12?
2. Describe a recent situation where the Golden Rule could have changed the outcome.
3. How does Philippians 2:3-4 support Jesus’ teaching?
4. In what relationship do you need to apply the Golden Rule this week?
5. How does living this way reflect the big idea?

Prayer Prompt: Jesus, help me treat others the way I want to be treated. Give me eyes to see opportunities to love proactively. Amen.

Action Step: Before speaking or acting today, pause and ask: “Would I want this done to me?”

Day 4: Jesus Loved Us First

Bible Reading: John 13:34-35, Romans 5:8

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus gave a new command: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” The sermon highlighted that Jesus perfectly modeled self-giving love—feeding the hungry, forgiving sinners, healing the broken. We are not left to produce this love on our own; it is powered by His love for us.

The big idea—When we love like Jesus loved us, the lonely and isolated can find their true home—calls us to reflect that same love. In a world of isolation, this Christ-like love becomes the visible sign that we belong to God’s family.

Reflection Questions:

1. What emotions arise when you read “as I have loved you”?
2. How does Romans 5:8 show us Jesus’ love?
3. What does John 13:35 say will identify us as Jesus’ disciples?
4. Where do you need Jesus’ love to flow through you?
5. How does this command connect to the big idea?

Prayer Prompt: Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me first. Empower me to love others the way You loved me. Amen.

Action Step: Choose one person and do something practical that shows Christ-like love (a note, a meal, a listening ear).

Day 5: The Mark of True Disciples

Bible Reading: John 13:35, 1 John 3:11-18

Jesus was crystal clear: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The sermon explained that faithful Jesus followers are not primarily identified by religious clothing, rituals, or practices but by this genuine, self-giving love.

The big idea—When we love like Jesus loved us, the lonely and isolated can find their true home—makes the church the place where strangers become family. This love is the visible sign of God’s family. In everyday life, it means noticing the unnoticed, welcoming the outsider, and building real connections.

Reflection Questions:

1. What does John 13:35 reveal about how the world recognizes Jesus’ followers?
2. How have you seen genuine love in action within the church family?
3. What challenges you most about 1 John 3:11-18?
4. Who in your life needs to experience this kind of love?
5. How will the big idea shape your witness this week?

Prayer Prompt: Father, make my love for others so evident that people see Jesus in me. Amen.

Action Step: Invite someone who may feel on the outside to join you for coffee or a church event this week.

Day 6: Helping Strangers Become Family

Bible Reading: Colossians 3:12-14, Hebrews 10:24-25

Reviewing the week, we move from recognizing loneliness to actively living the big idea: When we love like Jesus loved us, the lonely and isolated can find their true home.

The sermon gave three practical steps—welcome strangers at church, deepen our own connections, and open our doors to neighbors. God has made us family in Jesus; now we are called to help others find that same belonging. As we clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, and love, we become the hands and feet of Jesus in our community. Celebrate what God has shown you and keep the momentum going.

Reflection Questions:

1. What key insight from this week will you carry forward?
2. Which of the three steps feels most doable for you right now?
3. How has Colossians 3:12-14 challenged your view of church family?
4. Where will you apply the big idea in the coming weeks?
5. How can you celebrate and share this truth with someone else?

Prayer Prompt: Loving Father, thank You for making us family in Jesus. Help me love like You love so more people find their true home. Use me this week. Amen.

Action Step: Take one concrete step from the sermon's applications this week and share your experience with a friend or small group for accountability.



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