

Pick a Path

Talking to Strangers



Reflection Guide | Week 5

Connect (5 to 10 minutes)

If in a group, come together for fellowship and sharing about your week together.

- What is your favorite love story?

Context (30 to 40 minutes)

Dig deeper into the videos and scripture for this week through questions and discussion

Discuss Section 5 (Chapter 10-Conclusion) of Talking to Strangers. As a group, share your thoughts and feelings about the stories themselves. Have you been reading the book or listening to the audiobook format?

- What section or story stood out to you most?
 - In reflection, what made it so impactful? Have you done any further research on that study yourself?
 - Were there any stories you had already been aware of before reading these chapters? If so, do you think Gladwell did an accurate job portraying the events? Did he add anything or omit anything of note for you?
- Are there any connections you see between this book and the series we just finished about already being one in Christ?
- It is a popular Christian statement that we are to be in this world, but not of it. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? If not, how would you rephrase it?
 - Gladwell makes an important point to note how environmental factors influence our actions and decision making. How have you seen this occur in your life?
 - How can we learn to recognize the environmental and external factors that are playing a role in a situation? How do we acknowledge those factors with the people with whom we interact?
- Looking at the case of Sandra Bland in the context of the entire book, what emotions do you feel for her? What emotions do you feel for the officer? If you could go back in time and have a conversation with either of them in advance, what would you tell them?

- Read Ephesians 2:1-10. In this section of scripture, Paul is teaching the Ephesians the difference between what it means to have life in Christ versus being dead on our own. He ends by explaining how we are works of God. Coupled with Genesis where it says we are made in the image of God, we recognize that we are made by love for love in the image of love.
 - What does love look like between strangers? Where did you see love in this book? Could any of these stories have changed if there had been someone who was fully living into the love of God through their interactions? If so, how?
 - How did we see Jesus love us, both individually and as an entire humanity? What makes this sort of love different than how we typically describe it?
 - “To assume the best about another is the trait that has created modern society,” Gladwell writes. “Those occasions when our trusting nature gets violated are tragic. But the alternative – to abandon trust as a defense against predation and deception – is worse.” As you have finished the book, does this statement resonate with you? Why or why not?
 - How do you believe you will want to live differently as a result of this book?
 - How has it informed your faith?
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Closing (5 minutes)

- Share joys and concerns with one another.
- Close in prayer, either by inviting a group member to pray or by using the prayer provided below.

Closing Prayer

Loving God, you came to this earth so that it might be transformed, so that we might be transformed. We often fall short of that through our failure to embody the love you offered us as an example. Forgive us of this shortcoming and allow us to see that we have the capacity to go forward and do so. We give you thanks for this book study and ask that you allow us to recognize how these stories can transform our actions going forward. Let us see people more fully. Let us acknowledge the ways that we might never fully understand another person. Let us love them all the same. And let us accept the love that others give us because this is the greatest gift that we can receive: love and grace from you and from others. Amen.