

CORNERSTONE

DISCIPLESHIP

GROUPS

RELIGIONSHIP OR RELATIONSHIP? YOU PICK
PART 2 | PASTOR JONATHAN BURNS
SUNDAY, AUGUST 30, 2026

Overview

Part 2 — Making Your Home in Christ

Core Scriptures: John 15:1–8; James 1:22–25; Revelation 2:1–5

Overview

Pastor Jonathan opened this message with a challenge worth carrying into your group time. Rather than listening for who else might need to hear it, commit as a group to approaching these questions personally and honestly. The goal is not to evaluate others but to examine yourselves. The distinction running through the entire message is simple to state and costly to live: a religionship is maintained by external activity, while a relationship is cultivated in private. What follows is designed to press on the private side.

Main Takeaways

1. **Abiding is not passive.** Jesus calls believers to make their home in him — not to visit occasionally. The difference between religionship and relationship is whether we are actively cultivating intimacy with God or simply going through external motions.

2. **Hearing the Word is only the beginning.** James makes clear that hearing without doing produces self-deception. The ball game happens outside the walls of the church, in private moments when no one is watching.
3. **Three private disciplines reveal the true condition of our walk.** Consistent giving, a consistent prayer life, and regular time in Scripture are not optional add-ons for the especially devoted. They are the basic markers of a believer who is doing the Word and not merely hearing it.
4. **God views his relationship with the church through the lens of marriage.** Ephesians 5 reveals that the intimacy God desires with each believer is not casual or distant. It is the most sacred kind of union Scripture describes. We are betrothed to Christ, and he gave everything to have that relationship with us.
5. **The remedy for a cold or stalled walk is simple, if not easy.** Remember. Repent. Return to the works you did at first. Pastor Jonathan described the early days of genuine faith as a time when spending time with God felt natural and urgent. That posture is available to every believer at any point.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

The group was asked to be selfish for thirty minutes — to hear the message only for themselves. How difficult was that for you, and what or who did your mind drift toward? Before going further, name honestly how you would explain the difference between religion and relationship to someone who has never set foot in a church.

On Abiding

Pastor Jonathan described abiding as making your home in Christ — being most comfortable and most yourself there. By that definition, where do you currently feel most at home? What does your answer reveal? He also described the experience of finally sitting down to pray after a long gap and feeling the discomfort of distance. Have you experienced that? What did it feel like, and what did you do about it?

On Being a Doer of the Word

James 1 compares hearing the Word without doing it to glancing in a mirror and immediately forgetting what you look like. Can you think of a time when a sermon or a passage moved you in the moment but produced no lasting change in your behavior? What happened between the moment and the Monday?

According to Pastor Jonathan, the deception James warns about comes from thinking that hearing is enough — that by being present and engaged, we have done what is required. How does that kind of self-deception take root, and what makes it so difficult to recognize in ourselves?

On the Three Red Flags

Take the three in turn. Galatians 6 frames withholding from the ministry not as a neutral financial decision but as sowing to the flesh. Philippians 4 connects an active, consistent prayer life directly to experiencing the peace of God — and many people want relief from anxiety without doing what the verse actually instructs. And simply exposing yourself to Scripture, apart from any particular intelligence or background, will reshape your mind, appetites, and priorities. Which of those three claims is hardest for you to accept, and why?

Of the three disciplines — giving, prayer, and Scripture — which one is the most consistent in your life right now? Which one is the most neglected? What is one honest reason why?

On Returning to Your First Love

Revelation 2 gives a three-part instruction: remember, repent, and do the works you did at first. Pastor Jonathan described his own early days of faith as a time when being with God was all he wanted. What were the early days of your faith like, and what has changed since?

He observed that the things your flesh resists the loudest are almost always the most important things for you to do, and that a strained walk with God can quietly steal your confidence even when you know your salvation is secure. Have you found either of those to be true? What does your resistance reveal about where your heart actually is?

Practical Application

Choose one or more of the following to commit to before your group meets again.

Schedule the appointment. Identify one specific time and place where you will spend time alone with God this week — not a vague intention, but a slot on the calendar. Tell someone in the group what it is.

Open the Word for seven straight days. Begin or restart a Bible reading habit. It does not need to be a lengthy or structured plan. Open it, read, and ask God to speak to you through it. Report back to the group.

Examine your giving honestly. If you are not a consistent giver to the church where you regularly hear the Word, ask God to show you what is holding you back. If fear or financial pressure is the obstacle, bring that honestly to him rather than managing it alone.

Make prayer the first move, not the last resort. Practice Philippians 4:6 this week. Each time anxiety or worry surfaces, stop and bring that specific concern to God before doing anything else. Keep a simple record of what happens.

Write down what your best looked like. Describe your walk with God when it was at its healthiest. What were you doing then that you are not doing now? Share it with a trusted person in your group.

Closing

Ask God to reveal, gently and honestly, whether your current walk with him reflects a real and living relationship or a pattern of external activity that has become disconnected from the heart. Invite him into whatever gap exists. Ask him to make you a doer of the Word — not for the sake of performance, but because of genuine love for him.

News & Events

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

- September 2 & 20 - Communion
- September 13 - Intro to Cornerstone Life
- September 27 - Guest Speaker, Jeremiah Johnson
- October 3 - Ladies Event
- October 24 - Harvest Party
- October 29-31 - Men's Advance
- November 7-8 - Guest Speaker, Chad Gonzales

