WEEK 1

WHAT IS AUTHENTIC AND GRACIOUS COMMUNITY?



PRIMARY SCRIPTURES

James 5:13–16; Luke 5:17–26

BIG TRUTH

Authentic community brings our real lives into the presence of Jesus, where we learn both to carry others and to be carried.

PREPARE: READ AND OBSERVE

Read James 5:13–16 and Luke 5:17–26. Circle repeated words, underline commands, and note what the passages reveal about God, people, and relationships.

My first observations or questions:

KNOW: UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH

As you study these passages, consider what they teach us about authentic and gracious community. Pay attention to the role of honesty, mutual care, and the centrality of Jesus in our relationships.

Vulnerability Opens the Door to Healing
James connects honest confession, prayer, and healing. Biblical vulnerability isn't telling everything to everyone; it is truthfully opening our lives to God and trustworthy believers. We move from disconnection to surface conversation to transparency, and finally to vulnerability, sharing not only what happened but what is happening in our hearts.

Community Is Mutual Ministry
In Luke 5, one man is carried, and several friends carry him. Healthy community makes room for both roles. We are not self-sufficient saviors, and we are not passive consumers. We receive help humbly and offer help faithfully.

Jesus Is the Center
The friends don't just bring the man into a room; they bring him to Jesus. Christian community is more than friendship or emotional support. Christ forgives, heals, transforms, and holds the community together.

Doctrine: What We Believe
The church is the body and family of Christ. Every believer is united to Christ and therefore belongs to one another (1 Corinthians 12:12–27). Grace makes honesty possible: we do not confess to earn acceptance. We confess because in Christ we are already known and loved.

Supplemental Passages: Genesis 2:18 • Romans 12:4–5 • 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 • Galatians 6:1–2 • Hebrews 10:24–25

KNOW QUESTIONS

1. According to James 5:13–16, how should believers respond to suffering, sin, and the need for healing?

2. What did the friends in Luke 5 risk or sacrifice to bring the man to Jesus?

3. How is Christian community different from a social club or support group?

FOLLOW: PRACTICE THE WAY OF JESUS

Move from what the text means to what faithful obedience looks like in your actual relationships. Choose at least two questions to answer fully before the group meets.

1. How would you describe your relationships: disconnected, surface, transparent, or vulnerable? Why?

2. When you are struggling, are you more comfortable helping others or allowing others to help you? Why?

3. What qualities make a person safe for vulnerability? How can you grow in those qualities?

4. What is one thing you need to honestly share with God or a trusted believer this week?

FOLLOW: PRACTICE THE WAY OF JESUS

This Week's Practice
Ask one trusted believer for a private conversation. Share one real burden, struggle, or need; ask for prayer; then receive their care without minimizing your need.

My specific person, action, and time:

REFLECT: ATTEND TO THE HEART

Take time to examine your heart in light of what you've learned. Consider what the Holy Spirit is revealing about your attitudes, fears, and relationships as He forms you to reflect Christ.

1. What fear most often keeps you hidden?

2. Where have you experienced Jesus through the care of His people?

3. What would change in our group if grace—not image management—set the tone?

RESPOND AND PRAY

Jesus, help me bring my real life into Your light and become a safe, gracious presence for others.

One truth I want to remember:

One step I will practice:

People and needs we will pray for: