



# #SHARK SERIES

## PART 1: NEVER SWIM ALONE

There is an often-ignored principle that determines the quality and direction of our lives. While we are quick to recognize the importance of this principle in our children's lives, as adults, we feel like we can disregard it. However, the truth is that we are just as impacted by the power of this principle now, as we were when we were younger. Today, we will discuss how we can become intentional about harnessing this principle for our spiritual development.

### BIG IDEA: **ALONE** you'll never get where God wants to take you.

Dr. Henry Cloud says, "God created us with a hunger for relationship – for relationship with Him and with our fellow people. At our very core, we are relational beings—the soul cannot prosper without being connected to one another."

1. Judging by the people you spent time with last month, what kind of company do you keep? By contrast, who did you used to hang out with 5, 10, 15 years ago?
2. Tell the group about one or two of your friends. Why did you choose them? What was the basis for your connection?
3. **Parents Only:** If you could pick friends for your kids, who would you pick and why? What would be their characteristics of these friends?
4. How have these people influenced you? What is something that you have learned from each person?
5. *With the Bible or Bible App, read Proverbs 13:20.*

*He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20 (NIV)*

6. Chris said, *Your friend determine the direction and quality of your life.* As you look back, how have you seen this principle work itself out in your life?
7. As adults, we know this principle that *Your friends determine the direction and quality of your life.* We talk about this to our children and teenagers all the time. The problem comes when as adults? We think we're immune. Why do we tend to ignore our own advice?

*We think that because we don't have pimples and we have our own convictions, this doesn't apply to us. We couldn't be more wrong. Marriages have ended because of this principle. People's faith has been shipwrecked because they allowed the herd—the people they hung out with and did life with—to determine their values or lack of values.*

8. Are you missing the right **perspective** in your life? Read the following verses:

*Without wise leadership, a nation falls; there is safety in having many advisers. Proverbs 11:14*

*As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.*

*Proverbs 27:17*

You need 5 people in your life swimming with you in the right direction. If you have them, thank God for them. If you don't have them, ask God to lead you to a group you can swim with!

9. Are you **tired** from swimming alone? *With your Bible or Bible App, read Galatians 6:1-5.*

*Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important. Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. For we are each responsible for our own conduct.*

*Galatians 6:1-5 (NLT)*



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10. Think about this instruction. Are we to carry each other's burdens or carry our own?

*We certainly are called by God to come alongside others and invite others alongside of us. But we also must be sure we are doing our part to carry our own load. By dialing into our relationship with God, and growing in Him, we are able to carry our own load and help carry others'.*

11. What problems have you taken on that God may have never intended you to take on?

12. Are you swimming **unprotected**? Thank God for the 5 people in your life that would drop everything to come to your side when you need them the most. Are you that person for someone else? Read about the early church's sense of community and connectedness in Acts 4:32.

*All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had.*

*Acts 4:32 (NLT)*

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Read the value of unity in the following verses: Colossians 3:14, Psalm 133:1, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Peter 3:8, Ephesians 4:3.
2. If God values unity this much, we should as well! What are you doing to build and fuel unity in the church and with other believers?
3. *With your Bible or Bible App, read Hebrew 10:24-25.*

*Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

*Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)*

4. The writer of these verses assumes that his readers have been regularly meeting together? Is the idea of “doing life together” a familiar or foreign concept in your experience?
5. Who are the people who would celebrate alongside you if you were to accomplish a major life milestone (i.e. graduation, job promotion, childbirth)? Are they the same people who would stand beside you during a major spiritual/character milestone or a major life crisis?
6. How intentional are you about developing your character? What steps, if any, have you taken to pay attention to your interior life?
7. What might keep you from engaging fully in a group committed to doing life together?

## THINK ABOUT IT

Clinical psychologist and author Dr. Henry Cloud says, “God created us with a hunger for relationship – for relationship with Him and with our fellow people. At our very core, we are relational beings. The soul cannot prosper without being connected to one another.”

Alone and isolated are two words God never intended to be used to describe His children. Right now, thank God for the people in your life...or ask God to send the right people into your life!

## MOVING FORWARD

Specifically, who have been some of the biggest spiritual influences in your life? How did they influence you? Who have you influenced this past week? Has it been a positive influence? Negative influence?

## CHANGING YOUR MIND

*He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20*