ROOTED IN CHRIST · SEVEN-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Find a place to belong and grow.

Explore Christian community with honest questions and an unhurried next step.

Full Bible passages · Guided prayer · A practical step each day

A little encouragement before you begin. You do not have to have everything worked out before you begin. Take time to ask, listen and find a healthy place to grow.

Christian Growth Guides · Rooted in Christ · 7-day journey

For people new to Leeds, students, families, returning Christians, and anyone considering a different church after a difficult experience. Discover the difference between a welcoming atmosphere and a healthy Christian community, identify your questions, and choose an unpressured next step.

Begin the study · Start the devotional · Plan a visit

> Therefore accept one another, even as Christ also accepted you, to the glory of God.
>
> *Romans 15:7, World English Bible British Edition*

Go deeper: the Bible study and group discussion

Belonging begins with Christ

Ephesians 2:13–22, printed under Day 2, describes people once divided becoming one household through Jesus. Church is more than a service to attend or a personality to follow. Its centre is Christ, and its members learn to receive one another because he has received them. You do not need a polished story to begin exploring. Equally, an invitation to belong is not permission for anyone to control your decisions, money, friendships or private life.

Look for the practices behind the welcome

Read Acts 2:42–47 and 1 Peter 5:1–5 under Days 3 and 4. Notice teaching, shared life, prayer, generosity and leadership by example. Ask how the Bible is taught, how leaders are accountable, how children and adults at risk are protected, and how concerns are heard. A healthy response welcomes reasonable questions. A crowded room, exciting music or impressive claims cannot replace character. No congregation is perfect; a willingness to acknowledge and address harm matters.

Move at a wise, honest pace

Romans 12:3–8, under Day 5, makes room for different gifts and different stages of growth. Visit, listen and ask before making commitments. You may need accessible arrangements, help with children, or time to rebuild trust after church hurt. Name those needs without apology. Joining a church should deepen your relationship with Jesus and your ability to love others, not make you dependent on one leader or afraid to leave.

Discuss and apply

1. What does Ephesians 2 say creates Christian belonging?
2. Which practices in Acts 2 would help you grow?
3. What would accountable leadership look like in practice?
4. What questions or access needs would you like to raise before visiting?
5. What is one next step you can freely choose without making a commitment today?

Your practical exercise: Create a church-home conversation sheet with three headings: What I hope for; What I need to understand; What would make me feel unsafe. Include beliefs, children's arrangements, accessibility, safeguarding, leadership accountability and membership expectations. Ask two questions during a visit or through the contact page. Afterwards, record what was actually said rather than what you hoped was meant.

For group leaders: Do not turn this discussion into recruitment pressure. A person may need independent support after church abuse and may choose another congregation. Do not demand a testimony or details of past harm. Seek permission before contact, touch or prayer. Explain safeguarding limits rather than promising absolute confidentiality.

Seven days of Bible reading and prayer

Each full daily passage is printed below. Read, reflect, pray and choose one manageable action. The declarations are optional, Scripture-shaped expressions of trust and commitment, not new revelation or guarantees of a particular outcome. You may explore without affirming beliefs you do not yet hold.

Day 1: Received before impressive

Read Romans 15:1–7.

> [1] Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of the weak, and not to please ourselves. [2] Let each one of us please his neighbour for that which is good, to be building him up. [3] For even Christ didn't please himself. But, as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." [4] For whatever things were written

> before were written for our learning, that through perseverance and through encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
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> [5] Now the God of perseverance and of encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, [6] that with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
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> [7] Therefore accept one another, even as Christ also accepted you, to the glory of God.

Reflect: Paul connects welcome with the welcome Christ gives. You are not auditioning for acceptance by sounding spiritual. Consider how a congregation treats the quiet visitor, the person with questions and the person who cannot contribute money. Receive grace, and learn to extend the same grace without surrendering wise boundaries.

Consider: What would an unpressured welcome look like for you?

Pray: Lord Jesus, help me receive your grace and recognise a community that reflects your welcome. Give me courage to ask honest questions. Amen.

Declare: In Christ I am welcomed; I can seek community without pretending or rushing.

Practise: Write one question you would like a church to answer.

Day 2: A household, not an audience

Read Ephesians 2:13–22.

> [13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off are made near in the blood of Christ.
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> [14] For he is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the middle wall of separation, [15] having abolished in his flesh the hostility, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man of the two, making peace, [16] and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, having killed the hostility through it. [17] He came and preached peace to you who were far off and to those who were near.
>
> [18] For through him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. [19] So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, [20] being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone; [21] in whom the whole building, fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; [22] in whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

Reflect: The passage describes people becoming a household built on Christ. Christian belonging includes learning to care for others, not simply consuming a weekly experience. You can explore that possibility gradually. Being new, single, older, international or unsure of your beliefs does not make your questions less worthy of attention.

Consider: Where do you most need connection rather than performance?

Pray: Father, lead me towards relationships rooted in Jesus. Help me give and receive kindness without losing my voice or my freedom. Amen.

Declare: Christ is the foundation I seek; I do not have to earn belonging through performance.

Practise: Identify one person you could introduce yourself to safely.

Day 3: The habits of shared faith

Read Acts 2:42–47.

> [42] They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer. [43] Fear came on every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. [44] All who believed were together, and had all things in common. [45] They sold their possessions and goods, and distributed them to all, according as anyone had need.
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> [46] Day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, [47] praising God and having favour with all the people. The Lord added to the assembly day by day those who were being saved.

Reflect: The first believers shared teaching, prayer, meals and practical generosity. Their example invites more than enthusiasm for an event. Ask where people can learn Scripture, receive care and contribute appropriately. The passage is not a demand to surrender possessions to a leader; generosity serves real needs and must not be coerced.

Consider: Which shared practice would help you grow this season?

Pray: God, develop a steady love for Scripture, prayer and people in me. Show me a manageable way to participate in shared life. Amen.

Declare: I will seek a faith that becomes patient, practical love.

Practise: Ask how newcomers can explore Bible study without committing to membership.

Day 4: Leadership that serves

Read 1 Peter 5:1–5.

> [1] Therefore I exhort the elders amongst you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and who will also share in the glory that will be revealed: [2] shepherd the flock of God which is amongst you, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion, but voluntarily; not for dishonest gain, but willingly; [3] not as lording it over those entrusted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock.
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> [4] When the chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the crown of glory that doesn't fade away.
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> [5] Likewise, you younger ones, be subject to the elder. Yes, all of you clothe yourselves with humility and subject yourselves to one another; for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Reflect: Peter tells leaders to shepherd willingly and by example, not to dominate. Spiritual authority is not exemption from questions or accountability. Notice whether disagreement is handled respectfully and whether safeguarding concerns are taken seriously. You can honour leaders while refusing intimidation or secrecy that protects wrongdoing.

Consider: What would you need to know about leadership accountability?

Pray: Good Shepherd, give leaders humility and give me discernment. Protect those who are vulnerable and help our churches respond honestly to concerns. Amen.

Declare: Jesus is Lord; no human leader owns my conscience or excuses harm.

Practise: Read ANCC's beliefs and safeguarding information, and note any unanswered question.

Day 5: Different gifts, equal dignity

Read Romans 12:3–8.

> [3] For I say through the grace that was given me, to everyone who is amongst you, not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think; but to think reasonably, as God has apportioned to each person a measure of faith.

> [4] For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members don’t have the same function, [5] so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another, [6] having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us: if prophecy, let’s prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; [7] or service, let’s give ourselves to service; or he who teaches, to his teaching; [8] or he who exhorts, to his exhorting; he who gives, let him do it with generosity; he who rules, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Reflect: A body needs different members. You do not need another person’s confidence, background or abilities to matter. At the same time, belonging need not begin with volunteering. Rest, receive teaching and discover your capacity. Service offered freely can grow from relationship rather than pressure to prove loyalty.

Consider: What gift or life experience could serve others in time?

Pray: Holy Spirit, help me see others with honour and myself with sober hope. Guide my participation without comparison or overcommitment. Amen.

Declare: By God’s grace I have something to contribute, and I may also receive care.

Practise: Name one strength and one present limit you want to respect.

Day 6: Encouragement with room to heal

Read Hebrews 10:19–25.

> [19] Having therefore, brothers, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, [20] by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, [21] and having a great priest over God’s house, [22] let’s draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our body washed with pure water, [23] let’s hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering; for he who promised is faithful.
>
> [24] Let’s consider how to provoke one another to love and good works, [25] not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Reflect: This passage links gathering with drawing near to God and encouraging love. It should not be used to shame someone who is ill, grieving or recovering from abuse. Seek connection that is appropriate and safe. A conversation, accessible gathering or supported return may be a wiser beginning than forcing yourself into an overwhelming situation.

Consider: What form of safe Christian encouragement is possible now?

Pray: Father, help me take a wise step towards encouragement. Heal what has been wounded and lead me to people who respect my pace. Amen.

Declare: I can move towards healthy fellowship without denying my need for safety and healing.

Practise: Choose one realistic way to connect this week.

Day 7: An open door for someone else

Read Luke 10:25–37.

> [25] Behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
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> [26] He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?”
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> [27] He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.”
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> [28] He said to him, “You have answered correctly. Do this, and you will live.”
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> [29] But he, desiring to justify himself, asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbour?”
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> [30] Jesus answered, “A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell amongst robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. [31] By chance a certain priest was going down that way. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. [32] In the same way a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. [33] But a certain Samaritan, as he travelled, came where he was. When he saw him, he was moved with compassion, [34] came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. He set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. [35] On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the host, and said to him, ‘Take care of him. Whatever you spend beyond that, I will repay you when I return.’ [36] Now which of these three do you think seemed to be a neighbour to him who fell amongst the robbers?”
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> [37] He said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Reflect: Jesus turns the question of neighbourliness into active mercy. As you seek a church home, notice who is overlooked and how compassion becomes action. You need not

be established or confident to show ordinary kindness. A healthy community receives newcomers and also helps them become neighbours to others.

Consider: Whose experience of welcome could your kindness improve?

Pray: Lord, make me attentive to people others miss. Let my search for belonging also deepen my willingness to offer practical kindness. Amen.

Declare: With God's help I will receive welcome and extend it without partiality.

Practise: Review your questions and choose whether to visit, ask more, or take more time.

Your next step

Plan your visit or ask ANCC a practical question. For church hurt or a difficult transition, request a pastoral conversation at your own pace. Continue through the New Believers hub or Explore Faith.

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