

CONNECT GROUP

LAUNCH



CONNECTING PEOPLE TO A GROWING
RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST



CONNECTION
CHURCH DUBLIN

CG Launch

Congratulations on beginning a new Connect Group! We're excited for you and your group. We believe that real life change happens in community. We pray that God blesses you and uses you in a mighty way. We really believe that life change happens in community! We're honored to be with you on this journey of connecting people to a growing relationship with Jesus. We will continue to pray for you and offer you guidance and direction as you help others experience the Gospel through biblical community.

What is a Connect Group?

The vision for Connect Groups comes from the church described in Acts 2:42-47. In this passage, we see a group of people unified around a common purpose and a key set of values. We structure our groups to be a replica of what we see in this scripture. Simply put, we are doing discipleship in community. We provide environments that are centered on the Gospel, where people are connected to other believers, where they share life together, grow together, and care for one another. Together, we embrace the mission to reach others with the Gospel.

What values make up a healthy Connect Group?

Connect Groups are grounded by three core values: Growth, Care and Mission. Peter Drucker once said "culture eats strategy for breakfast." We want our Connect Group communities to be places that embody these core values which creates a really good culture for spiritual growth. When someone comes to a Connect Group for the first time, we pray that they will grow with others spiritually, care for one another, and live life on a mission to see others come to Christ.

What's the goal of a Connect Group?

There is no "one size fits all" when it comes to discipleship. The overall focus of a Connect Group is to meet people where they are and help them get to where God wants them to be. This can be natural, as well as messy. The basic goals for a Connect Group are:

- Grow a group to 10-15 people
- Develop an environment that facilitates authentic community and spiritual growth
- Identify and develop a leader and multiply the group (start a new one)

Now that you've got a general overview, let's get going with our 4 sessions so that you can begin and reach people for the Kingdom of God.

Session 1 - Meet & Greet

Goal for Topic 1: Members will get to know each other better and get a feel for what a Connect Group is.

Start Group with Meal Time (20min): Meal time is an informal time to start off the Connect Group. It can be a full meal, snack, or even coffee. During this time, your group will discuss what's going on in life and learn more about each other.

Share Time:

When the meal is finished, gather everyone into a circle.

1. Go around the circle and ask each person to introduce themselves (name, occupation, and an interesting fact).
2. Give a breakdown of what group time will look like every week: Meal, Share, Bible, Prayer. Talk a little about the importance and purpose for each component. People will feel comfortable if they know what to expect.
3. Share the 3 core values of a Connect Group: growth, care and mission. Share these values early and often.

Opening Questions:

1. What do you want to get out of this group? This may seem a little light, but it will allow people to get comfortable with you asking personal questions.
2. How have you gotten to the place where you are currently in your relationship with God? It is important for you to know where people are if you plan to help each other grow.

Preparing for next week:

1. Share with the group what you will read for the week - Acts 2:42-47.
2. Let the group know that you will text out questions for them to work through this week before the next group meeting.
3. Agree on a way to regularly communicate with the group (group texts, WhatsApp, etc.)

Prayer:

1. Share with each other the one person who you know that would benefit from being a part of this group. Pray for that person.

Session 2: Defining Biblical Community

Preparation for the Leader:

Why is it important to redefine people's idea of community?

It is important to understand that every person in your group will come in with experiences and ideas that have shaped their view of what community is. Some of these will be right and some wrong. Use the opening question about their church experience to help get a grasp on some of these preconceived ideas. Then, focus on the goal of this session – helping them see what community is and how it plays out in the Bible. Acts 2 will give you a great picture of what this looks like. Most people's experiences with church will not be what we see in Acts 2, and it will give you a great opportunity to refresh and redefine what the church should be. Striving after this biblical picture of community will be the catalyst for God changing lives in your Connect Group.

What is community?

Community exists when a small group of imperfect people commit to Jesus and walk through life together. In Acts 2:42-47, we get the biblical picture of discipleship in community. Notice the three overarching components: growth, care and mission. These people were focused on growing in their relationship with Jesus.

What are some of the biggest challenges in establishing community?

Two of the greatest challenges when it comes to establishing community are commitment and honesty. Where these are lacking, it is hard to create community. Community takes commitment mainly because it requires trust, and trust takes time. Also, loving others is difficult and requires us putting the needs of others above our own. This doesn't come naturally and requires the Holy Spirit, intentional work, and effort. Many times it will be a great challenge. Talk about commitment with your group often. Another challenge in establishing

community is honesty. Honesty, along with the power of the Holy Spirit, is powerful. However, honesty requires trust, and sometimes trust is a difficult thing to develop with people. A few things can help with this. Honesty starts with you as the leader. Set the tone by being honest yourself, and your group will follow suit. Pray for honesty, and look for ways to catalyze relationships in your group. The deeper the relationships, the more honest people will be. Lastly and most importantly, talk about the gospel as much as possible. The gospel frees us up to be honest and imperfect because God's love for us is secure in Christ.

For Group Time

Goal for this session: Members will gain an understanding of biblical community and their part in it.

Start Group with Meal Time (20min): Meal time is an informal time to start off the Connect Group. Your group will discuss what's going on in life and have time to learn more about one another.

Opening Questions:

1. What does success look like for a Connect Group?
2. How would you describe your church experience in the past? Good or Bad? Explain.

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47 - Read this passage together and focus on what the disciples' community looked like.

Context: This church was the first church formed after Jesus went back to heaven.

Text Questions:

1. What do you notice about this group of people?
2. What does it mean to be devoted to something?
3. What were they devoted to? Discuss each one individually.
 - a. Verse 42: What does it look like to be devoted to God's word?
 - b. Verse 42: What does it look like to be devoted to each other (fellowship)?
 - c. Verse 42: What does it look like to be devoted to remembering Christ (breaking of bread)?
 - d. Verse 42: What does it look like to be devoted to prayer?
 - e. Verse 44: What does it look like to be devoted to serving, sharing possessions and generously meeting needs of people (both inside and outside of their group)?

- f. Verses 45-46: What does it look like to be devoted to regularly meeting together, sharing meals together, and being sincere and vulnerable?
- g. Verse 47: Why did they have favor with their community, and why were they attractive?

Reflection & Application Questions:

1. What does this look like for us?
2. From the list above, which devotion(s) will be potentially challenging for this Connect Group?
3. How can this group make an effort to immediately address potential challenges?

Prayer Time: Share with each other the one person you know who would benefit from coming to a Connect Group. Pray for them. Invite them to your group.

Session 3: Connect Group Vision: Growth

When it comes to growth, it can look different for everyone, but the goal is always the same. The goal is to become more like Jesus. Growth can be summed up with 3 phrases: Loving God, Loving Others, Making Disciples. Falling in love with Jesus is what growth is all about. Everything else simply falls into place from there. As we pursue this relationship with Christ, killing sin in our lives, seeking to walk in obedience (listening to God and doing what He says), and learning more about Christ and making disciples will be our desire. Loving others is how we reflect God to the world around us. Loving Jesus and loving others go hand in hand. Christ is our example for love. He laid his life down for the sake of others and he wants us to do the same. Before Jesus went back to heaven, his final words to us were “make disciples.” This is God’s purpose for the life of every believer. If our idea of growth doesn’t include embracing the mission to make disciples then our idea of growth is wrong. Unfortunately many people are what I like to refer to as “spiritual ticks.” They’ve been filled with lots of sermons and knowledge, but have not applied it to daily life. They are not doing the one thing Jesus gave us to do. Jesus left us with one mission and that is to go and make disciples. Our growth must include going to others, introducing them to Jesus, and teaching them to obey all that he has commanded.

How do we help people grow?

There is no A+B=C equation when it comes to growth. However, Jesus gave us the model: life on life. We believe with all our heart that authentic, relational discipleship is the best means of spiritual growth. It's all about meeting people where they are and helping them get to where Christ wants them to be. In order to help people grow, it is important to get an honest assessment of where they are. This takes time and happens best in deep relationships where trust is present. Focus on building relationships with people. They need to know how much you care about them and need to experience your vulnerability. Helping people is all about pointing them to Christ, sharing His Word, and teaching them from what God has taught you. This is why our personal relationship with God is so important. We can't teach others what we don't know.

How to develop a Connect Group that fosters growth?

- Transparency- Growth happens as people let their guard down. Work hard to create an environment in your group where people feel comfortable to be honest.
- Deep Relationships- More than often, it will take you building a relationship with your members outside of Connect Group to build a deep relationship with them. They need to know that you really do care about them. Focus on each person as an individual. Try to get to the point where you have a good idea where every person in your group is in their relationship with God.
- God's Word and Holy Spirit- The power of God is in the Word of God. Focus on getting your group members into the Bible during group time and outside of group. Teach them how to read the Bible to hear from God and not just for intellectual knowledge. Point them to lean on the Holy Spirit. He is their greatest asset.
- Prayer- Only God can change people. When we recognize this, we will pray. Remind yourself of this often. Pray often.
- Confidentiality- Make it clear that what is said in group has to stay in the group. Nothing will destroy trust and honesty in groups quicker than gossip.

Things to avoid:

- Arrogance- Acting like you know everything, not being transparent about your imperfections, talking down to others, etc. All these are how pride and

arrogance overflow. These are the greatest hindrances when it comes to helping others.

- Be Real! No one likes to be talked down to. We are all a work in progress and are all broken people. The quicker we let people know that we are broken and in this beside them, the quicker they will let us help. Craig Groeschel says, “a person would rather follow a leader who’s always real rather than one who’s always right”.
- Complacency in our own walk- The last thing that Satan wants is for us to be helping others grow. So, he will attack you and try to sever your connection with God. We must recognize that this is going to happen and work hard to fight against complacency, sin, and comfort in our own relationship with God.
- Reading just for Connect Group- As a group leader, you may be tempted to replace your personal time with the Lord for time spent thinking and preparing for your group. Although the Lord will most likely speak to you about your group through your quiet time with Him, you must remember that your personal quiet time is when your full intention and purpose is focused on spending alone time with Jesus for Him to minister to your life and to your walk.
- Preparing Right Before Connect Group- Connect Group can come out of nowhere sometimes! If you find yourself consistently preparing for your Connect Group moments before it meets, then it’s time to investigate why. Ask yourself, “what would my leadership look like if I remembered that being a Connect Group leader means that I am shepherding God’s people to grow in their relationship with the Lord?”
- Impatience- It is easy to become impatient with people. Especially when we see them walking in some of the same mistakes that we’ve made. But, remember how patient God has been with you and extend the same grace to others as they strive to grow. Nothing shows us the love of God and sanctifies us more than loving others.

Session 3: Community: Growth

Goal for Topic 3: Members will gain an understanding of spiritual growth and what it looks like within a Connect Group.

Start Group with Meal Time (20min)

Ask your group: what has the Lord revealed to them in their quiet time?

Opening Questions:

1. What does growth look like as a Christian?
2. What has helped you grow the most in your relationship with God?

Scriptures: Ephesians 4:11-16, Matthew 28:18-20

Text Questions for Ephesians 4:11-16

1. What is the purpose of church leadership?
2. What is the goal of Christian growth?
3. Why is it important to grow to maturity in Christ?
4. Was any Christian intended to sit on the sideline and not participate in spiritual growth?
5. How do we grow as Christians?
6. What disciplines do we need to apply to our lives to grow in our faith?

Text Questions for Matthew 28:18-20

1. What was Jesus' last command for us?
2. Who is called to make disciples?
3. How does spiritual growth and the mission to go and make disciples correlate?

Reflection and Application Questions:

1. How does having people in my life that desire these things for me help me grow?
2. How do we grow spiritually?
 1. Understanding the Gospel
 2. Worship
 3. Reading God's Word
 4. Prayer

Prayer: Go around the group and have each person in the Connect Group say the name of one person in their life that they would like to see God transform. Ask one person to pray for these people by name.

Session 4: Connect Group Vision: Care (Leader's Guide)

To put it simply, to care for people in a Connect Group is to have the same heart for them that Jesus does. Think about it like this. Are people in your group hearing and experiencing the same things that Jesus would tell them if He was in your group? This can play out in many ways. It can be showing people grace through a tough situation or walking alongside someone when everyone else has given up on them. It can be speaking the truth to someone when they need it or visiting someone in the hospital. It is people experiencing the love of Christ through others.

Why is care so important?

Nothing allows people to tangibly experience Christ more than care inside a Connect Group. Jesus is no longer physically present on earth. He designed the church to allow people to physically experience Him through the way they are loved and cared for by other believers. This is why Jesus taught how believers should relate with others in the New Testament (see the "one another" statements). The primary way that people will experience Christ in our church is through Connect Group. This is why it's important that care is happening.

Care overflows from true love.

Care is a culture. Care is a lot more of a mindset than it is a set of directions. When we truly care about people, we will do the right things. In every situation that you encounter, think about how you would want to be treated. This is care. What does care look like in a Connect Group?

- Walking Alongside people through tough situations
- Tough Conversations
- Hospital Visits
- Meeting Needs/Taking care of one another

What are the major challenges to care?

- Our Selfishness- Care many times doesn't come natural to us. We are all selfish, but God has commanded us to see others as more valuable than ourselves.
- Having Tough Conversations- Sometimes truly loving and caring for others requires us to have difficult or uncomfortable conversations. Many times it will seem easier to just not say anything. However, it is impossible to truly love someone and watch them go down a path that will lead to destruction.

- Bad Timing- Sometimes the timing of having to care for someone conflicts with your schedule and will require you to sacrifice your priorities for the sake of others.
- Stepping into Tough situations- Many times, loving and caring for others will put you in tough or even heartbreaking situations. Don't ever hesitate to ask your coaches or a pastor for help.

Session 4: Care

Goal for Topic 3: Members will gain an understanding of care and what it looks like within a Connect Group.

Start Group with Meal Time (20min):

Scriptures: Use the 'One Another Statements' on the next page. The Bible has a lot to say on how believers should relate to one another. The next page lists all 59 statements in the New Testament that refer to our relationship with other believers. Examine these together and discuss how to apply them within your group.

Text Questions:

1. Why do you think the Bible talks so much about our relationships with other believers?
2. Which of these statements do you think is the most important to a healthy small group? Why?
3. Which of these statements is the most difficult to apply? Why?
4. Which of these statements would mean the most for someone to do for you personally?

Reflection and Application Questions:

1. How can we strive towards applying these as a group?

Today's Activity: Go around the group and have each person in the Connect Group say the name of one person in their lives that they would like to see God transform.

Prayer: Pray for the individuals that group members shared.

One Another Statements

1. Love One Another.(John 13:34-35;John 15:12-13;John 15:17;Romans 13:8;1 Thess 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 3:11; 1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:7; 1 John 4:11-12; 2 John 1:5)
2. Be devoted to one another.(Romans 12:10)
3. Honor one another.(Romans 12:10;Philippians2:3)
4. Live in Harmony with one another.(Romans 12:16;1 Thess 5:13;1 Peter 3:8)
5. Stop passing judgment on one another.(Romans 14:13)
6. Accept one another.(Romans 15:7)
7. Instruct one another.(Romans 15:14;Colossians3:16)
8. Greet one another with a holy kiss.(Romans 16:16;1 Cor 16:20;2 Cor 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14)
9. Agree with one another.(1 Corinthians 1:10)
10. Wait for each other. (1 Corinthians 11:33)
11. Have equal concern for each other. (1 Corinthians 12:25)
12. Serve one another. (Galatians 5:13)
13. Do not provoke or envy one another. (Galatians 5:26)
14. Carry each other's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)
15. Bear with one another. (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13)
16. Be compassionate to one another. (Ephesians 4:32)
17. Forgive one another. (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13)
18. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs. (Ephesians 5:19)
19. Submit to one another. (Ephesians 5:21)
20. Do not lie to each other. (Colossians 3:9)
21. Encourage one another. (1 Thess 4:18; 1 Thess 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; Hebrews 10:25)
22. Build up each other. (1 Thess 5:11)
23. Spur one another on toward love & good deeds. (Hebrews 10:24)

24. Do not give up meeting together. (Hebrews 10:25)
25. Do not slander one another. (James 4:11)
26. Offer hospitality to one another. (1 Peter 4:9)
27. Clothe yourself with humility toward one another. (1 Peter 5:5)
28. Be kind to one another. (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
29. Don't grumble against one another. (James 5:9)
30. Confess your sins to each other. (James 5:16)
31. Pray for each other. (James 5:16)

Session 5: Connect Group Vision: Mission (Leader's Guide)

Before Jesus ascended, He left us with one mission: to make disciples of all nations. A disciple can be defined as a follower or a student. In our case, it's someone who has laid down their life to follow Jesus. Making disciples has three very important components: Go, Baptize, and Teach.

- Go - Before we can tell people about the love of Christ we have to go to them. God has given each of us a sphere of influence. He has surrounded us with people in the workplace, gym, schools, cities, etc. He did this so that we could tell them and show them the love of Jesus. Remember, discipleship is about meeting people where they are and helping them get where God wants them to be.
- Baptize - Baptism is what happens after people put their faith in Christ. After we go to people, we have to do what it takes to help them meet Jesus. Building relationships and sharing the gospel is how this happens. When someone comes to faith in Christ, the next step is baptism.
- Teach - Once someone gives their life to Jesus, God wants us to walk alongside them and teach them to obey all that He has commanded. People learn obedience best when they have an example to follow. This is what it means to teach. We must walk alongside people and help them learn to listen to God and do what He says.

What are the main hindrances to us embracing the mission of God?

The biggest hindrance is that we feel inadequate. "I'm not good enough. I don't know enough. I still make mistakes." All of these are the thoughts that pop in our head when we think about making disciples. But here's the truth. We are all

broken and still a work in progress. And we will be this way for the rest of our lives. Our greatest asset when it comes to helping others become disciples is that we are in the same boat with them. Discipleship does not require perfection, it requires pursuit of Jesus. If you are pursuing Jesus and have the Holy Spirit, you can make disciples. 2 Peter 1:3 confirms that his divine power gives us everything we need for a Godly life.

How do we help others embrace the mission?

We lead by example. We model it for them and empower them to repeat the process. Tell others about your experience making disciples. What you do with them will be what they do with others. This is good and scary at the same time. We need to have a plan. This is why Connect Groups are formatted the way they are. They are formatted to model for you what it looks like to make a disciple. Share what God is teaching you. Model for them how to read the Bible, how to pray, how to share the Gospel, etc.

Remember, Satan wants to distract you!

Satan's goal is to steal, kill, and destroy the kingdom of God. Disciple-makers are his worst enemy. Know that he is going to do whatever he can to keep you and your group distracted from the mission. Be intentional and hold each other accountable. When Christianity's focus becomes something other than knowing God and making disciples, we have missed the point.

Remember the 3 goals for a small group.

To help keep the mission in front of the group, remind them of the 3 goals:

1. Grow a group to 10-15 people.
2. Develop authentic biblical community.
3. Equip the group to multiply and start a new group.

Session 5: Connect Group Vision: Mission

Goal for Topic 3: Members will gain an understanding of the mission of God and see the importance of helping one another embrace it in their everyday lives.

Start Group with Meal Time (20min):

Ask your group: what has the Lord been revealing to you in your quiet time?

Opening Questions:

1. Who is the most driven person that you know? What characterizes them?

(Draw out that driven people have a motivation, a purpose, and a goal.)

2. What is the purpose of a believer's life?

Scriptures: Matthew 28:16-20. Read this passage together and talk about the importance of Jesus' last command to us. Each of us were saved for a purpose. That purpose is to make disciples of all nations. This means God desires worshippers among every single tribe, language and people group. Our growth, our joy, and our obedience to God are directly linked to us embracing this mission.

Text Questions:

1. What is the mission of God?

2. What is a disciple?

3. What does it look like to make a disciple?

(Point out and talk about the 3 aspects: Go, Baptize, Teach to obey)

4. What is our biggest hesitation or insecurity when it comes to making disciples?

(Directly counter the idea that you to be perfect to make disciples. Allowing people into your imperfect pursuit of God is the best way to make a disciple.)

5. What does it look like for our group to embrace this mission and multiply?
Why is it worth it? (draw out the 3 goals for a Connect Group)

Reflection and Application Questions:

1. As a group, how can we embrace the mission of God together?

Prayer: Go around the group and have each person in the Connect Group say the name of one person that they could begin to disciple. Ask one person to pray for these people.

Closing: Congratulations! You have completed Connect Group Launch! It is our prayer that the Lord will do incredible things in and through your group! Next week prepare your group to use the weekly Sermon Connect Group Guide that can be found at connectiondublin.com on the homepage. If you have any questions, please reach out to the discipleship pastor or your Connect Group coach.

THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO
EQUIP GOD'S PEOPLE TO DO HIS
WORK AND BUILD UP THE
CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST.



EPHESIANS 4:12



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