

Dear Connect Group Leader,

Welcome to Connect Group Leader Training! You are here to learn about a basic building block of how we minister to people at Impact. As a small group leader, you will join the ranks of those who have been entrusted with the precious gift of caring for the body of Christ.

The relaxed, relational dynamic of our small groups make them fun and life-giving. That's because the concept of small groups is Biblical and deeply spiritual. Our model is the early Church, when the disciples of Christ devoted themselves to fellowship and teaching.

We have carefully and deliberately created a system where you, as a leader, are cared for also. You will be paired with a coach. Never underestimate the importance of these people! Being the parents of three children, Tomekia and I often had a child involved in some type of program or event. As their dad, I always appreciated the coaches and motivators in their lives, who provided leadership, training, and encouragement. They made my job as a parent easier!

The same will be true at Impact as we launch our Connect Groups. This structure provides a necessary spiritual covering, a friendly accountability, and a very strong support.

So, enjoy your leadership training. Dream your dreams. Live your passion. Get creative, and let's see what God will do!

I love being your Pastor,

Pastor Corey

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SECTION 1: THE HEART OF CONNECT GROUPS

What We Do

We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all energy, which so powerfully works in me. (Colossians 1:28-29)

- "We proclaim Him" is Evangelism through Weekend Services.
- "Admonishing everyone" is **PASTORAL CARE** through **CONNECT GROUPS**.
- "Teaching everyone" is Discipleship through God First Life.
- "Present everyone perfect" is Ministry through the Serve Team.

Purpose

To reach people with the life-giving message of Jesus that they might become fully devoted followers of Christ

Vision

To raise up people who know, worship, and obey God according to the Scriptures

Mission

To promote healthy relationships through connect groups which empower people for ministry

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Connect Groups Provide Three Things

1. A place to **CONNECT**.

...yes, whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him. (1 Corinthians 9:22 TLB)

It is easy to feel alone in a crowd. Connect groups are an open door into the life of our church family. When you are in a connect group, you experience the love and strength of biblical community.

2. A place to **PROTECT**.

We know what real love is because Christ gave up His life for us. And so we also ought to give up our lives for our Christian brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:16 NLT)

Imagine someone you can call when you're discouraged, someone to pray with when you are doubting, and someone who can teach you more about what God is like. Imagine a loving community of people who notice when you are away, gently sharpen you when you need it, and who help you share your faith with others. Connect groups are a place where you are protected and supported.

3. A place to **GROW**.

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.
(Proverbs 27:17)

Connect groups are a place you can be equipped to become more like Jesus and to live a faith-filled life. We believe that every person is created with God-given potential to make a difference in the world. Connect groups are a place where there are like-minded people who believe in you. This is how leaders are developed. We

want to see you grow, flourish, and become all that God has called you to be!

Why Connect Groups?

1. Life change happens in the context of **RELATIONSHIPS**.

We are designed for relationships. Relationships define us, grow us, challenge us, strengthen us, and bless us.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

Our culture **DEVALUES** personal relationships, but the scripture requires relationships.

Section 1: The Heart of Connect Groups

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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 10:25)

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:2)

2. At Impact Church, we believe our church must grow **LARGER** and **SMALLER** at the same time.

Connect groups are the vehicle through which ministry at Impact takes place.

Connect groups provide a setting to build dynamic relationships and facilitate spiritual growth.

3. Therefore, Impact is a church **OF** small groups rather than a church **WITH** small groups.

Our model for connect group ministry, known by many as small groups is the early church. The book of Acts records the tremendous growth of the first church in Jerusalem. Connect group meetings in homes were the foundation of the early church.

(They met) day after day, in the Temple courts and from house to house. (Acts 5:4)

Connect groups keep us connected. Connect groups are the most effective way of closing the back door of our church.

Connect groups are important for handling the pastoral care functions of the church. They provide the personal touch that people need, especially in a crisis.

Flow of Leadership

The flow of relationships that enables people in ministry:

Senior Pastor

Pastor Corey Williams



Connect Group Leader

Bible studies, Men, Women, Marriage, L.I.F.E, Prayer, Outreach,
Student Ministries, Financial, Fitness and health

Connect Group Assistant



**Our Connect Group structure is maintained through
relationships.**

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Your Connect Group Assistant

Each Connect group leader should have a goal of identifying a Connect Group Assistant as soon as possible. Assistants are there for prayer covering, support, and a direct line of communication. Utilize your assistant if you have a need, prayer request, or concern.

Assistants serve leaders by:

- Praying for connect group leaders daily
- Assisting them in any way
- Providing care for connect group leaders and their groups through prayer, social interaction, and attention to special needs

How We Do Connect Groups

Our free-market connect group system allows leaders to turn their existing relationships, gifts, interests, passions, and hobbies into disciple-making small groups.

The free-market concept incorporates any life-giving activity that is of interest or enjoyment to the group leader, and ideally, others as well.

Free-Market Connect Group Model: Impact equips leaders who minister to people in need.

- Connect group leaders are **CO-LABORERS** with God and the five-fold ministry team.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
(Ephesians 4:11-13)

Six Features of Free-Market Connect Groups

1. Free-market leaders use their **GIFTS** with their **PASSIONS**
2. Built on **FELT** needs & **COMMON** interests
3. Meet **WEEKLY** on a **SEMESTER** calendar
4. Quickly identify an **ASSISTANT**
5. Welcome **NEW PEOPLE** into the group anytime during the semester

Our groups are as varied as we are. Group leaders use their gifts and passions to create a group that allows others to join with them in serving God. We have groups for all ages, interests, days, times, and locations. We foster an environment where our groups "do life" together with others.

As a leader be innovative and creative! God has designed each person uniquely, and He can use that uniqueness as a catalyst for relationship building.

Your Assistant

Assistants are like co-leader's. Their role is the same as the leader's role in caring and praying for connect group members.

SECTION 2: YOU THE LEADER

What About the “Fear Factor”?

- When you are afraid, you must **RELY** on God.
“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” (II Timothy 1:7)
- If we only do what we feel comfortable doing, we don’t need **GOD**.
“If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.” (Ecclesiastes 11:4 NLT)

Understanding Your Role

We believe you can effectively lead a small group if you can:

- **ENCOURAGE PEOPLE**
- **SHARE SCRIPTURE**
- **PRAY**

“Be sure you know the condition of your flocks; give careful attention to your herds.” (Proverbs 27:23)

Your primary role as a connect group leader is to help members in your connect group **MOVE ONE** step further in their walk with Christ. Some practical steps to accomplish this are:

- If a group member is not in a relationship with Christ, bring him/her to a **CHURCH SERVICE**.
- Encourage group members to be **WATER BAPTIZED**.
- Challenge group members to complete the **GOD FIRST LIFE**.
- Connect group members to the **SERVE TEAM**.

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Tips to Being a Successful Connect Group Leader

1. **PRAY DAILY** for group members. Tell them you are praying for them and encourage them to pray for each other.
2. **DEVELOP** an assistant. This may be the most fulfilling accomplishment of leadership: helping someone find his/her purpose in God by learning to help others.
3. **SPEND TIME** individually with group members between meetings.
4. **FOSTER COMMUNICATION** within the group. Encourage them to fellowship outside of the group through phone conversations, email, or sharing a meal or coffee.
5. **RALLY** the group around a member going through crisis. Use wisdom and be sensitive!
6. **COMMUNICATE** regularly with your Coach.

A Family Within a Family

"God sets the lonely in families." (Psalm 68:6)

God knows we need a loving group of people around us. It is through connect groups that we can see the church family functioning in relationships of genuine love and practical care. In connect groups we celebrate personal victories, we support each other through difficult times, we believe in each other's potential, and we show loyalty by keeping confidence.

We care for our connect group members in practical ways:

1. **ACCOUNTABILITY** - Ask tough questions; help them keep commitments.
2. **AFFIRMATION** - Offer words of encouragement and support; affirm their strengths.
3. **ASSESSMENT** - Evaluate their condition objectively; help them gain perspective.

4. **ACCEPTANCE** - Provide unconditional love and grace to them even when they fail.
5. **ADVICE** - Speak words of wise counsel and give them options for their decisions.
6. **ADMONITION** - Offer words of caution and warning so they can avoid pitfalls.
7. **ASSETS** - Give them tangible gifts and resources – a book, a CD, or a personal contact.
8. **APPLICATION** - Direct them to discover how they can practice what they've learned.

Leader Responsibilities

With the privilege of leadership comes responsibility. In his pastoral letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul lists some standards for leadership.

If anyone wants to provide leadership in the church, good! But there are preconditions: A leader must be well-thought-of, committed to his wife, cool and collected, accessible, and hospitable. He must know what he's talking about, not be over fond of wine, not pushy but gentle, not thin-skinned, not money-hungry. He must handle his own affairs well, attentive to his own children and having their respect... The same goes for those who want to be servants in the church: serious, not deceitful, not too free with the bottle, not in it for what they can get out of it. They must be reverent before the mystery of the faith, not using their position to try to run things... Those who do this servant work will come to be highly respected, a real credit to this Jesus-faith. (1 Timothy 3:1-13, MSG)

Leaders are asked to abide by an honor code and commitment located on page 27.

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A Small Group Leader is:

1. Passionate about God and people.
2. A person of character and integrity.
3. Committed to personal spiritual growth.
4. Supportive of the vision and mission of the church.

This includes:

- o Attending a Sunday service
- o Supporting the church financially through tithes and offerings

SECTION 3: YOUR CONNECT GROUP MEETING

The Unseen Element

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them. (Matthew 18:20)

Think of a recent connect group meeting that you really enjoyed. What made it encouraging or helpful, so that you were looking forward to the following week? Aim to lead a connect group meeting you want to go to!

- A **POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE** that is full of faith, hope, and love inspires people to grow, facilitates healthy relationship building, and allows the Holy Spirit to work. Connect groups are an expression of church in your home. There should be a culture of encouragement, blessing, and unity. Your meeting reflects the heart and vision of Impact Church!
- As a leader it is your role to set the **TONE** and **CULTURE** of your group. Atmosphere does not just happen! How can you create an effective atmosphere that builds others up? Consider the location of your group, your preparation for the meeting, and the example you can set as a leader.
- Cultivate a **LIFE GIVING** atmosphere. Be a source of encouragement. You do not need to know all the answers or be the source of all wisdom. The Holy Spirit is there to help and guide you.

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How to Lead My Connect Group Meeting

Things to Do:

1. **FELLOWSHIP**
2. **TOPIC OR ACTIVITY**
3. **SPIRITUAL COMPONENT**
4. **MINISTRY**

Things to Avoid:

1. **Business**
2. **Offerings**
3. **Unapproved speakers or material**
4. **Controversial Topics**

Location

We encourage all small groups to meet outside of the church building.

If you cannot meet in your own home, look for a host home (possibly the home of someone attending your group). Other possibilities for meeting locations include:

- Library conference room
- Recreation center
- Subdivision clubhouse
- Outdoors in a park
- Restaurant
- Coffee Shop

Group Dynamics

- Give time for **DISCUSSION**. Avoid doing all the talking. A good guideline is the "70-30" rule. Approximately 70% of the speaking should be from members and 30% from the leader.
- Keep the discussion **POSITIVE**. Carefully lead the conversation back to the topic when tangents occur. Where sensitive issues or complex questions arise in your group, follow up one-on-one after the meeting.
- When possible men should **MINISTER** to men and women to women. Couples may minister to a single.
- Steer the discussion in a direction where **EVERYONE** can participate.
- Remember that some people may not grasp phrases that are **COMMON** to us. (i.e. spiritual warfare, washed in the blood, etc.)
- Be prepared to **CHANGE THE DIRECTION** of the meeting if needed. The primary goal is to create an environment where people feel loved and accepted.

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Building Relationships

Your capacity to develop **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS** will enhance your ability to minister in **TIMES OF NEED**.

Recruiting

- Start with people who are already in your sphere of influence (co-workers, friends, neighbors).
- Find people around you who are new to the church, new believers, or have shown interest in getting involved.
- Look for people who you think you can help draw out their potential.
- Pray for God to send people to you who you haven't already discovered.

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SECTION 4: PRAYER

It is important that you, as a connect group leader, develop your prayer life and be able to teach others how to pray and to encourage others in their prayer life. One of your greatest responsibilities will be to pray daily for the people who are in your connect group. Prayer will be a key to your effectiveness.

In *James 5:16*, the three key principles for prayer are given, "*the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much.*"

- Fervent - This word means intently, violently or white hot - gives you the idea of being welded together. God wants us to pray with the kind of intensity that welds us together with His presence.
- Effectual - It is not enough to pray; we must learn to pray effectively.
- Avails much - You might translate this "gets results." This is where we want to end up... with results.

Prayer is the **FOUNDATION**.

Your connect group ministry starts with you.

1. To be effective, you have to have been affected.
2. To be poured out, you have to be filled up.
3. To share Him, you have to know Him.
4. To lead people to Christ, you have to know where He is.
5. To fulfill His purposes for your group, you have to know what those purposes are.

Prayer **COVERS, PROTECTS, and ENLIGHTENS.**

You need to spiritually prepare the environment before group members arrive.

1. Humble yourself.
2. Pray over the house or room.
3. Invite the presence of the Holy Spirit.
4. Ask God to work in the hearts of those He is calling to be there.
5. Ask God to prepare their hearts to receive what He wants to impart.
6. Pray that the Scriptures read will come alive in their hearts.

Prayer is a **CONNECTING POINT** for ministry.

Your group needs to offer an opportunity for the ministry of the Holy Spirit in people's lives.

1. Make ministry available.
2. Ask the Lord for wisdom and discernment.
3. Ask for His compassion.
4. Ask for His eyes, ears, and heart.
5. Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
6. Involve everyone when possible.
7. The pressure is on God.

Be filled with Him.

Seek His vision.

Prepare the way.

Fulfill the call.

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SECTION 5: RESOURCES

The Process

1. Be a member of Impact Church
2. Complete God First Life
3. Attend Connect Group Leadership Training
4. Complete the Connect Group Leader Application and one-on-one interview
5. Agree to comply with the Connect Group Leader Commitment and Honor Code

Next Steps

- Decide on a topic or an activity you love, a place to meet, and a time that works for you
- Register your group online
- Recruit people to come to your group
- Pray and know that God is going to do great things in your group

Connect Group Leader Job Description

Supported by: Connect Group Assistant

Prerequisites:

1. Become a member of Impact Church and complete the God First Life new members classes
2. Attend Connect Group Leadership Training
3. Complete and meet the requirements of the Connect Group Leader Application

Responsibilities:

1. Pray for and coordinate weekly connect group meetings to include the following: Fellowship, Topic or Activity, Spiritual Component, and Ministry.
2. Pray daily for everyone in your connect group.
3. Be an example to your connect group members, developing them into future leaders.
4. Provide a supportive atmosphere in which connect group members are able to discover and develop their spiritual gifts.
5. Maintain unity by representing the philosophy of ministry and theology of Impact Church.
6. Be open to counsel from your leader and provide highlights and concerns about your connect group regularly.
7. Unless specified, welcome new people into the group anytime during the semester.
8. Encourage members to invite people who are outside the church.

NOTES

Connect Group Leader Honor Code

As an essential part of the Impact Church Leadership family, you have a responsibility to develop and exhibit mature Christian behavior. This should be the basic premise of your desire to work in a Servant/Leader position here at Impact Church.

While serving the Body of Christ as a connect group leader at Impact Church, you pledge to demonstrate Biblical standards in all situations. As Christians, the way we present ourselves to others is of vital importance to the way others perceive Christ. Our conduct should never be an embarrassment to Christ, but should exemplify the best qualities of a mature believer and Servant/Leader.

"I pledge to exemplify the highest moral commitment and maintain a disciplined life of Bible reading, prayer and fasting. I will refrain from such things as profanity, smoking or chewing tobacco, gambling, indulging in much wine, other alcoholic beverages, dishonest gain, illegal drugs, pornography, sexual immorality, and all behaviors which might cause Christ to grieve and others to stumble.

My behavior will exemplify the principles of Christ in speech and action. I will encourage others to grow in Christ and become Servant Leaders. I commit to this as a way of life measured by the heart and commitment of each leader in the Impact Church family. I will regard this Honor Code as an essential part of development and not as an imposition or restriction."

Leadership Commitment

"Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience... They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons." (1 Timothy 3:8-10)

Qualifications

- Sincere, worthy of respect, and of a good reputation.
- Tithe regularly to Impact Church.
- Have a genuine desire to serve and minister to other people.
- Able to lead, motivate, and teach other people.
- Able to create positive group dynamics, and deal with conflict resolution within the group.

Preparing for a Connect Group Meeting

- Invite people to your group.
- Email or call the day before your group as a friendly reminder.
- Create nametags for those that have called or emailed.
- Have food and snacks available.
- Create an inviting environment with worship music.

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Icebreakers

Remember, the best icebreaker is transparency.

Questions to open discussions:

- Where were you born?
- What type of family were you raised in?
- What is the one thing about you that is unique?
- Who is someone who has influenced your growth as a Christian disciple? What did they do?
- How did you end up at this Connect Group Meeting?
- What is your favorite childhood memory?
- What was Christmas like when you were a child?
- Where did you live when you were growing up?
- What was your greatest struggle as a teenager?
- What is your earliest recollection of God?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- What is the farthest place you have ever traveled to?
- Who was your favorite teacher, and why?
- How do you feel the church (in general) has helped you as a person?
- What is a time during the week that you can relax?
- What do you most like about your life's calling?
- What do you least like about your life's calling?
- What is one thing that gives you satisfaction?
- Which household chore would you like never to have to do again?
- How do you work on your relationship with Christ during the day?

- What is your greatest joy in your faith?
- What is your greatest struggle in your faith?
- If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be, and why?
- Where would you live if you could move anywhere in the world, and why?
- How would you like to see your closest relationship develop in the next year(s)?
- What area of your faith would you like to work on in the next few years?
- If you could have three wishes come true, what would they be?
- If you could write one news headline for the whole world to see, what would it be?
- What is your greatest anticipation of the future?

NOTES

Some Fun Ideas

It is important to involve your group in other activities outside the settings of a connect group meeting. One of the purposes of connect groups is to develop relationships and a sense of community. Therefore, in order to get beyond certain perceived or actual barriers between relationships, you need to periodically do fun, social activities. Below is a list of ideas to use when planning an activity:

Summer barbecue

Pool party

Games: Outburst, Encore, Pictionary, Charades, etc.

Horseback riding

Hay rides (include hot apple cider and s'mores)

Bowling

Christmas party

Christmas caroling

Progressive dinners

Volleyball, horseshoes, badminton, roller skating, skiing, croquet

Miniature golf

Scavenger hunts

Birthday parties

Concerts, symphony, ballet, opera

New Year's Eve party

Picnics in the park

Valentine's Day banquet

Camping

White water rafting