

LBC CONNECT GROUPS 2015-2016

Imagine something small, starting something big.

It happened once, when a simple carpenter shared his life with 12 close friends. For three years, they ate together, played together, learned together, traveled together, laughed together, cried together, and even fought together. Their lives were changed, and then they went out and changed the world.

Do you believe it can happen today?

Imagine the direct descendant of that group of followers—the Church—doing the same thing today. Groups of a dozen people—sometimes a few more, sometimes a few less—sharing life together. Eating together. Playing together. Learning together. Traveling together. Laughing together. Crying together. And even fighting together. Whatever you call them, small groups have the potential to change lives. And the church. And the world.

It can be done. It *has* been done.

Small groups have been known to:

- Hold an entire church together when its leader confesses to moral failure.
- Transform neighbourhoods, communities, and even entire cities by selflessly demonstrating the love of Jesus in practical ways.
- Laugh together
- Hold a broken member with strong arms of support – physically, emotionally, spiritually, and even financially – during a time of crisis such as divorce, death, or illness.
- Spur individuals to greater personal spiritual growth.
- Instill a knowledge of scripture and a hunger for prayer.
- Share breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert, tea, midnight snacks, and pizza of all sizes, styles, and temperatures.
- Foster spirited discussion on matters both eternal and earthly.
- Introduce friends, neighbours, and work colleagues to a newfound relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Become (imagine this!) best friends.
- Transform the entire culture of a church by moving its attention outside its own walls.
- Serve as a laboratory for developing greater relational skills and health, sometimes even through conflict.
- Pool their financial resources to impact the life of a child, another family, or a missionary.
- Celebrate! Births, birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, accomplishments—anything from new babies to national championships.

Small groups are more than “just” a Bible study, although they provide the opportunity to study God’s word. They are more than a prayer group, although they can provide a “bridge line” to the presence of God. More than just a fellowship time or social hour, small groups can serve as the foundation for deep, truly life-changing relationships.

Healthy small groups have the potential to serve as a microcosm of the church, in its purest form: a safe place where people can encounter God, and find the resources and relationships to nurture their spiritual growth.

Starting or maintaining an effective small group ministry is not easy, of course. Relationships never are. “Successful” small group ministries—the kind that change lives—are clear about their purposes and intentional about their programs, yet remain focused on people. Having a small group *program* does not automatically equate to changed lives. **Relationships cannot be institutionalised. Growth cannot be manufactured.**

Yet while every church is uniquely called to minister in a particular setting, there are some commonalities to effective small groups:

LBC Connect Groups – Biblical Basis

OT – the spiritual life of the people of God was entrusted to the leaders of ancient Israel. Also the responsibilities of the extended family (Deut.6:1-7).

The OT recognized that the smaller and more intimate group was vital in supplementing the ministry of the nation’s leaders and providing an environment in which people could grow to full maturity.

NT – Jesus started a ‘house group’, the 12 disciples. Led by Jesus, the disciples were taught and equipped for service through the teaching and example of the master.

- The early church frequently met as ‘house groups’ – Acts. Chapter 2
- Paul often spoke of Churches (Rome, Corinth, Ephesus) but in each of these cities he also referred to ‘house group’ – Rom.16:3-5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2.

The aim of these groups: nourishment, discipleship, prayer, pastoral care & evangelism.

(Home Group’s) Vision:

To see our church as possible equipped to draw people to faith to nurture them in faith and see them grow as disciples. And within that to see every small group of Christians equipped for the task and prepare to grow.

LBC Small Groups exist to strengthen and support the mission of the church by developing and multiplying effective and vibrant small groups, capable of reaching, teaching, and caring for unlimited numbers of people.