



CONNECT GROUP LEADERS TRAINING

Church Resources

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.

Acts 2:46

Section 1

Orientation

- Introduction
- The Great Value of Connect Groups
- The Bridge Mission + Vision & Values

Introduction

At The Bridge, we continue to look for new ways that give expression to the body of all believers. We are convinced that each person in the body of Christ has been gifted by God, has been called by God and has a unique place in the body of Christ.

Life Group ministry is a great environment for everyone in the church to find expression for their gifts.

Recently we heard about, and investigated, a different method regarding Life Groups and how they function.

The more we talked and planned the more excited we became. It seems to be a mechanism that gives opportunity and scope for the gifts and passions God has placed and is stirring in all of us. We have been a church with Life Groups. We aim to change that focus, and rename, refocus and develop what we will call

“CONNECT GROUPS “

We want Connect Groups to be the vehicle through which ministry at The Bridge takes place, notwithstanding or to replace what takes place in our other services.

One of our values has always been that ministry and growth happen best in Connect Groups.

People who step up to lead a Connect Group and those who support them through faithful involvement are very strategic people to our vision.

Connect Groups will be introduced and developed along a two-fold focus incorporating gifts and passions, where people who are like minded may gather together weekly to explore not only Spiritual Development but also common “Interests”, whether that be through the medium of business mentoring, Arts, literacy, media, or simply down to earth interest of a common pursuit.

At The Bridge

We Connect All People to Encounter God's Word & Spirit

The Great Value of Connect Groups

There are good reasons why we pursue becoming a church of Connect Groups.

(1) We value Connect Groups because the scriptures value them and early church met in them.

In the book of Acts, we see the church committed to meeting in two specific venues. They met in the temple courts (as a large church group) and in one another's homes "in Connect Groups" small groups based on relationships (obviously not actually called connect groups, but for the purpose of this exercise we call them Connect Groups).

"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." - Acts 2:46

Here are a few scriptures that show the church met in homes as relational small groups, (we will call them Connect Groups), as a common practice everywhere they met:

- **In Jerusalem** - Acts 8:3: *But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.*
- **In Ephesus** - Acts 20:20: *You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.*
- **Philemon 1:2** - *To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home*
- **In Rome** - Rom 16:5: *Greet also the church that meets at their house.*
- **In Corinth** - 1 Cor 16:19: *The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.*

- **In Colosse** - Col 4:15: *Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.*

(2) We value Connect Groups because meaningful relational and genuine friendships are fostered best in Connect Groups.

The love of God among us is such a vital facet of our walk with the Lord. We walk in the obedience of God's plan when we value relationships and purity from the heart (1 Peter 1:22). It is right here, the loving relationship among believers, that Jesus said will demonstrate that we are His followers.

John 13:35 *By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

There are so many scriptures that we could draw on to continue this point.

Connect Groups give everyone the opportunity to connect meaningfully with others. There is time and place to share, to listen and to minister to one another. Connect Groups allow us to maintain deep friendships and loving connections no matter how large the church grows. We hope our church grows numerically and in maturity at the same time. The larger our church grows, the more important Connect Groups become to facilitate basic pastoral care functions. It is the love we share, through Connect Group interaction that is the fuel for the help we offer.

Connect Groups provide the personal touch and support we all need. This is especially true in a crisis, where we want help from people we know and trust. People don't connect to systems or plans or structures for very long. People connect to People. Meaningful connections between believers can be started in large church meetings but are best continued in a smaller setting. People connected like this have found their "church family" and seldom go looking for it elsewhere.

(3). We value Connect Groups because they may possibly be the most significant piece of the jigsaw to one of the greatest needs in our society.

The demand and the pressure on our time force us away from meaningful relationships, and God's intimate plan for each one of us. Add to that a passion for individuality and consumerism and it is no wonder that deep and meaningful relationships that the scriptures suggest seem foreign to us. For this reason, we set as one of the expectations at The Bridge that those who call the Bridge home, make a commitment to community.

The rewards of committing to building deep and healthy relationships in Connect Groups are considerable and eternal in their impact.

Randy Frazee in his book "Making Room For Life" Zondervan 2003 says the following:

"The American Institute of Stress has conducted extensive research on the role of social support in health. The findings are conclusive, incessant and staggering. For example, careful research was conducted on 232 patients who had undergone cardiac surgery. Of these patients, 21 died within six months. Two statistically significant mortality predictors that emerged from these 21 cases were a "lack of participation in social or community Groups, and the absence of strength and comfort from religion."

The medical community has pondered the strong connection between community and cardiovascular disease and concluded that wholesome community reduces hyperactive cardiovascular reactivity to stress. When that community is spiritually based, health rises even further. A commitment to community is a value worth the effort and time because of its spiritual, mental, emotional and social impact. Simply put, it is the community on earth Jesus told us to model. One of our values as a church is that love is the primary message of the gospel and should be our defining value. We believe that Connect Groups will help establish this best.

(4) We value Connect Groups because they create opportunity for people's gifts and passions to be developed.

The equipping of the saints is the big quest of ascension gift ministers. Once equipped, we all need expression. Connect Groups not only are ministering to one another but also reaching out into their community. They create not just the space but also the need for members to bring their gifts, one of our values is that teams are more effective than individuals. Members of a Connect Group working together accomplish much.

The Bridge's Mission, Values & Purpose of Connect Groups

Mission + Vision

At The Bridge, We Connect All People to Encounter Gods Word and Spirit.

Values

Encounter God

Engage people

Equip the Saints

Empower Leaders

Extend the Kingdom of God

Mission of Connect Groups

- Fulfill the Bridge's, church vision
- Promote healthy relationships in Connect Groups
- Empower people for ministry
- Release the creativity which Holy Spirit stirs in believers
- Impact our neighbors and nations

Section 2

Girders, Nuts & Bolts

- Structure
- Connect Groups
- Leading a Connect Group

Connect Group Structure

Let me focus this document for a moment on one of our values. We believe Engaging People in other words friendship before function.

“The strength of the relational bridge we form determines the weight of truth it can carry”

When we need to function beyond the relationship, we start to lean on issues like our corporate structure to get the job done. Jesus never set Biblical leadership in any other context but relationship. Christian leaders may not lord it over those who follow like the corporate structures of this world. Therefore, any structure we employ lives only by its strength in relationship.

Each Connect Group will be assigned an Elder/Deacon to come alongside the Connect Group Leaders to guide, encourage facilitate and help.

Connect Groups

What are the healthy features anticipated in a Connect Group?

1. Six features of The Bridge Connect Group Ministries
 - Anointed leaders use their gifts with their passions
 - Built on friendship & trust
 - Meet regularly
 - Leader to identify an assistant leader
 - Meet on a term calendar
 - Leaders are involved in ongoing leadership training & relationships
2. Four “do’s” of a Connect Group:
 - Bible Study
 - Prayer
 - Worship
 - Testimonies

3. Three “don’ts” of a Connect Group:

- Business
- Offerings
- Unapproved speakers

Characteristics of The Bridge Connect Groups

- They meet weekly.
- They have three or more people attending regularly, including the group leader.
- They develop & identify an assistant leader. It is a primary goal to develop Group members into future leaders.
- Each meeting includes one or more of the following: WORSHIP, PRAYER, BIBLE STUDY, and/or TESTIMONIES. (as per #2 above).
- Unless specified, they welcome new people into the Group at any time during the term.
- They are supported and empowered by the Connect Group Elder / Deacon.
- They encourage members to invite people who are outside the church.
- They complete their topic by the end of the term.
- They grow.

Duration of a Connect Group

- Each Connect Group will run based on a term set out, (ie. 6 - 10 weeks depending on the term).
- At the end of the term the Connect Group may be disbanded or recommence at the beginning of the new term.
- The Connect group may commence again under the same leader or a new leader, hence assistant leaders.
- Alternatively, a new “Interest”, may be sought.

Working with oversight - built on relationships

Here are a few suggestions to consider

- Involve your overseeing Elder/Deacon as much as possible
- Complain upwards and not horizontally as this spreads unnecessary gloom
- Stick with what you planned as much as possible in mid-term
- Encourage unity among members of the Group
- Involve as many members of the Group as you can in as much as you

can.

Leading a Connect Group

Components of a Connect Group meeting

In leading a Connect group they are meant to be relational and fun, and may take any form of "Connecting", with at least one of the "Four Do's" being at least one of the components of the group weekly. There may be more.

Connect Group Location

We encourage all Connect Groups to meet outside of the church building. Many times, someone you might want to invite to your Connect Group may feel uncomfortable in a church setting.

If you cannot meet in your own home, look for a host home (possibly the home of a friend attending your Group). Other possibilities for meeting locations include: Library conference room, recreation center, subdivision clubhouse, outdoors in a park, restaurants, etc.

Pray and God will give you a creative idea!

Other 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, a sense of community. Therefore, to get beyond certain perceived or actual barriers between relationships, you need to periodically do fun, social activities.

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? (That is, what is something that is true about you that probably isn't shared by anyone else in this Group?)
- ❖ 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?

Childcare

Childcare for adult Connect Groups will be the responsibility of each individual Group. Parents may decide to share the expense for a babysitter, or may choose to delegate that responsibility to a different parent each week. There are several high school and college students who enjoy babysitting, and you may want to contact them for your

childcare needs.

Various Bible based-children's curriculum (books, worksheets, videos) are available in most Christian bookstores. Of course, this is not a time for children to be unsupervised and it is the responsibility of the child's parent should anything be broken or destroyed while in a host home.

Remember:

Safety, safety, safety. Supervision, supervision, supervision.

Also, as a Connect Group leader, you may become aware of individuals who would like to attend a Connect Group, but do not have the resources to pay for a babysitter each week. Be creative in how to overcome this, and perhaps call on your Elder/Deacon for advice if you are unable to come to an agreement.

At The Bridge, we believe that members should not miss the opportunity to participate in a Connect Group due to a financial burden.

Section 3

Leadership

- Seeing yourself as a Leader
- What's expected of you as a Connect Group Leader
- Job description, commitment & honour code

The Responsibilities of Leaders

It's A Wide-Open Field

1 Timothy 3:1-12 "Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. 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. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.'

When Paul outlines the characteristics that elders and deacons are meant to live up to and possess, he is not stating a different standard for other leaders. Rather Paul is showing that this kind of behaviour; is the same expectation that each Christian must adhere to, when anyone takes on any form of leadership role and becomes an example to the body of Christ, it is not just for elders and deacons., but for all saints and other leaders within the body of Christ. Paul commends those who desire to have an oversight role in the church, as a noble task.

When we take on the responsibility to help, care or minister to others we do what is noble in the kingdom. This is very encouraging, as it does not place character and gifting leadership requirements beyond what

should be expected from every Christian. All it does emphasize, is that if we desire to take a leadership role, we understand that we must live up to the legitimate expectations scripture lays down.

Here are some of the practical considerations for all leaders, they must be:

- Sincere, honorable and respectable
- People who regularly attend and tithe to The Bridge and who support the church and its mission.
- Seen to 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.

Is Previous Experience Necessary?

The possibility of leadership exists for anyone who commits himself or herself to loving God and His people. As leadership skills can be taught and learned they are not a pre-requisite to leading a Connect Group. A commitment to developing your leadership skills is. This is where the Elder/Deacon assigned to your Connect Group may be able to help you.

You Are Able to Lead A Connect Group If You Can Do The Following Basic Leadership Tasks:

- Encourage, influence and connect with others
- Share scriptures
- Pray
- Work in team

What is Expected of a Bridge Connect Group leader?

Participate in The Bridge's Connect Group Leadership Enrollment Program

- Sign up on the website and express your idea for a Group by completing the Connect Group leaders "start a Group" form on the web or in this booklet

- Connect with your assigned Elder/Deacon
- Attend a leadership training time
- Identify an assistant leader and have them attend a leadership training time

Complete the Mission

- Establish the primary reason for the Group whether Encountering God, Engaging People, Equipping Saints, Empowering Leaders or Extending the Kingdom of God
- Pray for and coordinate weekly Connect Group meetings to include one or more of the following: worship, prayer, Bible study, and/or testimonies.
- Unless specified, welcome new people into the Group anytime during the semester.
- Encourage members to invite people who are outside of the church.
- Complete your topic during the term

Love & Care for People

- Show genuine interest in people's daily lives.
- Pray daily for everyone in your Connect Group roster and for your Elder/Deacon.
- Have fun.
- Be considerate to believers and unbelievers.
- Do your best to make it a great environment and meeting.
- Build deep and meaningful relationships with people.

Commit to Developing as A Leader

- Attend ongoing leadership training and orientation
- Meet regularly with your Elder / Deacon
- Raise up and mentor an assistant leader by discussing the Group and leadership issues relating to it with him or her.
- Have the Connect Group discuss how to improve the Group.

Stay the Course & Give Feedback

- Consistency in task, venue and time are very important.
- Stick to your idea and find creative ways to improve it.
- Aim to finish well and when finished please help with the 360° feedback evaluation of the Group.

Practical Leadership Training

Live an Exemplary Life

As we have already stated, leaders must live up to the standards God has for all people. If they do not, the authority of their role causes them to sanction sub-standard behaviors as normal and accepted. Hebrews 13:7, quoted below, teaches us that the lifestyle example of leaders communicates to those who follow them that their actions are not only options for followers but are to be emulated.

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

This call to imitation of leader's way of life and faith means that we need to bring our preaching and our practice together so that we are not open to the charge of preaching a "do as I say and not as I do" message. Aim to set an example for the church and interested guests specifically in your:

- Personal devotions and walk with the Lord
- Marriage
- Parenting – especially regarding discipline

Demonstrate Mature Values

It is my experience that the greater the responsibility we bear in the kingdom the less freedom we have to do whatever we please and the more responsibility we have to be mature and whole human beings. Often where others may, we may not. As leaders, we must demonstrate a mature response to the church. We love them even if they seem inconsiderate, obnoxious, ungrateful or irritating. We serve His bride because they are the people for whom Christ died.

Many times, leading people is the purest form of joy as we have the unique privilege of seeing them discover an aspect of the gospels power or of Jesus redeeming grace. Our role is to walk as humbly, authentically and maturely in front of them as possible. If the people who are meant to be following are more mature and more whole than the leader something is wrong. Leaders should demonstrate the most

mature attitudes of the Group. Of course, this includes a love and cooperation with the vision and mission of The Bridge.

Here are a few practical examples:

- Be the bigger person
- Love and serve more
- Show more humility
- Hold no grudges
- Have a sense of calling and clarity
- Use sanctified common sense

Develop Godly Habits

Training ourselves to be useful and helpful is an ongoing task. The scriptures show that we bear a great responsibility of co-laboring with God to accomplish our usefulness to Him.

2 Timothy 2:20 *In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

We will all be constantly growing in this until we die I suppose. Here are a few areas to develop Godly habits in.

- Always say only those things that are useful.
- Keep confidences.
- Complain upward.
- Make every effort to keep the unity.
- Connect different people; encourage the timid.
- Keep showing the horizons; help people see the big picture.
- Devoted to prayer.
- Believe the best of God and man.

There are many more and the scriptures abound with such precepts that are very helpful to a Godly lifestyle.

Connect Group Ministry Leader Commitment

All those in Connect Group leader positions are asked to agree to the following:

- Fulfill the responsibilities outlined in the section entitled “What is expected of the Connect Group leader”.
- Abide by The Bridge Connect Group Leader Honor Code
- Help fulfill the mission, vision and values of The Bridge
- Embrace and teach Christian principles as stated in The Bridge’s Statement of
- Faith

Connect Group Leader Honor Code

As an essential part of The Bridge’s 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 The Bridge. While serving the Body of Christ as a Connect Group leader at The Bridge, you pledge to present a good appearance at all times. In both attire and behaviour, you should strive to demonstrate Biblical standards in all situations. Others perceive Christ through His people. Our conduct should never be an embarrassment to Christ, but should exemplify the best qualities of a mature believer and servant/leader.

The Bridge Connect Group leaders are to maintain a disciplined life of Bible reading, prayer and other spiritual disciplines. You must also refrain from all behaviours which might cause Christ to grieve and others to stumble. While we desire you to be led by the Holy Spirit in these things, the scriptures clearly list such things as anger, malice and malicious talk, greed, rage, sexual immorality, hatred, idolatry, slander, factions, and sedition as the “to be avoided”. These should be avoided as we are strengthened by the grace of God, which teaches us to say no to ungodliness in any form.

More modern outward issues to be avoided may include pornography, smoking or chewing tobacco, illegal drugs, along with the age-old

profanity, gambling, drunkenness or enough alcoholic beverage to cause drunkenness, dishonest gain, to name a few.

While Jesus did say that the state of our hearts was a greater measure of our status before God, He did not say that the things mentioned above were unimportant. By providing an example in speech and action, we encourage others to grow in Christ and become servant/leaders themselves. This is a way of life measured by the heart and commitment of each leader in The Bridge family. We should regard it as an essential part of our development, not as an imposition or restriction. Please do not willingly or knowingly do anything to damage the reputation or ministry of The Bridge.

Support The Bridge and its leaders in its mission and intent. If you have disagreements with something or someone go directly to the people involved or their overseer. Do not participate in gossip or slander. Be caught saying only useful, encouraging or complimentary things behind peoples backs.

Have as much fun as you can while pursuing the ideas and dreams you have for Connect Groups. The more we want to do things the less they feel like work.

Keys to leading Connect Groups

Prayer

It is important that as a Connect Group leader you develop your prayer life. Be ready to teach others how to pray and to encourage others in their prayer life. One of your greatest responsibilities will be to pray for the people who are in your Connect Group.

Prayer will be the key to your Connect Group's effective ministry and the effectiveness of The Bridge.

1 Peter 4:11 *"If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."*

In the scripture above we see that our strength comes from Jesus and

the Bible asks us to serve with the strength He supplies. This implies that we spend time asking for strength and wisdom. Prayer for wisdom, understanding, strength and gifts are all important so that He can be praised and glorified.

James 5:16 *"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."*

There are a few places we suggest you offer the powerful and effective prayers of the righteous:

1. Pray for yourself. We suggest that before a Connect Group, the leaders spend time praying for strength and ability to lead. Ask that the Lord use you to draw others to Himself.
2. Pray for the place you meet as Jesus said, "speak peace to the house." Prepare the ground in prayer by humbling yourself. Pray over the house or place you are meeting. Invite the presence of the Holy Spirit.
3. Pray for the people attending. Ask Jesus to work in the hearts of those who will be there. Pray that their hearts will be ready to receive what He wants to impart. Ask that the Scriptures shared will come alive in their hearts and be impacting enough to change their actions.
4. Deliberately include time and opportunity for the Holy Spirit to move in people's lives. Make ministry time available. Dare to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit while taking time to explain what you believe and bringing people with you.

Set the Tone

The disposition of the leader has the most potential to set the disposition of the Group. Believe in what you are doing and be confident in the Lord's leading. Very seldom will we give our whole heart and effort to a halfhearted leader. When people arrive, and in your speech, be joyful and full of anticipation. Be excited to see everyone and excited by your topic. If life or the enemy is pressing hard against you spend time pressing into God so that His strength and hope can make your confidence and excitement real.

Romans 14:17-18 *"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and*

drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men."

The Bible asks us to serve Christ in righteousness, peace and joy that are given by the Holy Spirit. Our best and pleasing service to God, kingdom service, is brought in this way. It means we are deliberate about building relationship with the Holy Spirit and deliberate about enjoying His righteousness, peace and joy.

Prepare Well

Have a clear idea about what you see happening at the Connect Group time. Before the Connect Group time you should be able to describe what the successful conclusion of the Connect Group time looks like. In other words, you should be able to say it will have been a success if...

This clarity is a very helpful tool in your hands as it allows you to keep a focus when people need ministry or some have chased a rabbit trail. It will help you bring things back on track when any number of distractions has changed the focus. Do some research. Ask questions in order to be able to answer frequently asked questions. Often a subject will present questions that are common when people first encounter it.

Gear yourself and be ready to facilitate moving on when we are done with the previous point. You can say things like; "Let's turn the corner now to..." or "Looking at the next question..." or "That moves us into the exciting discussion on..." Listen for natural segues into your next topic or thought that make it easier and smoother to transition. Sitting in a Group where the leader is unprepared is difficult, as many of us have experienced.

You bless and help your Group by this attentive preparation and even though you may not get through all you planned, people will still be blessed by the preparation you did. Of course, if the Lord leads elsewhere or someone else has a specific need you can be flexible as needed. Don't let one persons need or passions drive the Group away from the stated focus. People in pain tend to focus on their own needs and while this is understandable it can after a while become all-

absorbing. It is your role as the leader to keep the balance. So stay on point, because one rabbit trail can lead to another and before you know it you have never come back to your original focus.

Be the guide on the side of the meeting.

Don't monopolize the meeting with all that you have planned and prepared. Include others and plan times for your assistant leader to own a part of the meeting time and let them know ahead of time. If they know they are to take a responsibility for a certain piece of the meeting it will be a great training ground for them in their leadership as well as making your job easier.

Make It Safe for Everyone

Some people find it easy to share in a public meeting while others are shy or reticent. Your aim is to create an environment where they all feel safe to share and bring their strength. It is your role as the leader to create a sense of safety where everyone feels they can share and be involved practically.

There are certain things you can do that will facilitate this. Be transparent personally, sharing with wisdom some of your own struggles, challenges, imperfections or fears. This helps people who don't feel that confident to identify with you. Ask the Lord for wisdom in what to share and don't dwell on these struggles either. Place the focus on the redemptive side of the story, what Jesus has done to help you and what you learned from Him. Be a good listener. Really listen to people as they speak and support each comment with appropriate responses.

Proverbs 18:13 *"He who answers before listening-- that is his folly and his shame."*

You may want to try to listen and give feedback in practical ways like; Rephrase what they said when appropriate. Then be aware to use non-verbal cues like a comfortable level of eye contact, have your body position facing the speaker and not aligned away from them. Try to leaning slightly towards them as this communicates attention and interest. Give an occasional nod or other affirmative gesture or sound

that encourages them and communicates your support. Ask people for their opinion especially those you haven't heard from. Be aware throughout any discussions of people who may have contributions but whose personality type prohibits them from bursting into the conversation. Encourage the timid as the scripture says. Learn to echo what people said as this is like an emphasis on their comment. Make it a habit to repeat the good stuff, highlighting it with your attention and repetition. Don't highlight or spend time on the bad or negative stuff unless you are deliberately dismantling it.

Lead the Dominators

There are people out there whose personality breathes up all the air in the room. Some of them are unaware of how their presence is unhelpful to what God is trying to do in the Connect Group. They dominate the Group by sharing too much or by their great need. If this is happening consistently you should try talking to them alone gently explaining the focus and the need to engage everyone especially if they don't yet know Jesus. Be encouraging of the things that are good and should continue. Point out the limiting aspects of their behavior.

If that doesn't work and they continue to dominate the Groups time and focus you can try cutting in gently or steering the focus of the Group deliberately. Talk to them about again in person after the Group time pointing out where you needed to interrupt. If the leader does not do this, usually no one else will and then the Connect Group is uncomfortably hijacked and unpleasant. People will begin to lose interest in a Connect Group thus dominated. Try to say things like: "Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet" or "Does anyone else have an opinion" or "Who else wants to comment on this issue?" but don't let one person consume all the time and attention.

Frame Open-Ended Question

Questions that can have a single word answer are less helpful than questions that require dialogue. "Do you like sports?" is a less effective question than "What was your passion in high school and why?" which demands a multiword answer. Usually questions that start with: who, where, and when will only require single word answers. Questions that start with: why and how and what often require dialogue.

Be Flexible

This is where your earlier preparation is a very helpful ally. If the Lord starts to move and you sense a great moment brought on by the Holy Spirit, you should follow His leading. Stay with these fruitful discussions or directions. Sometimes we stumble into moments of pure ministry and when that happens don't move a muscle. Stick with it and keep that moment as long as you can because often eternity has kissed the clock and significant things can happen in those moments.

Many of those moments, although hoped for, were never specifically planned. Sometimes through a question or someone's vulnerability, a moment occurs that goes deep and touches a chord with the Group. It might be an "aha" moment for someone or the surfacing of a pain long suppressed or a misunderstanding. The correcting of these things is valuable so don't be quick to cut them off.

Summarize the Time

Just as at the beginning you may say this is what we are aiming to do today, you may want to consider summarizing what happened. Most people find great benefit in this and often remember the summary better than the actual details. You are like the rain gauge that stands at the end of the time recording the rain that fell for all to see. Remind them of what happened among the Group and of what you learned or accomplished. Remind the Group of the good done and especially the things God may have said.

This kind of summary is helpful not only to the Group but to you as a leader and is useful as a summary for your coach. Give your coach the summary of your time as he or she has been praying for you and the time and is just as eager to hear what you have to say. This is what the Bible says we are to do.

Galatians 6:6 *"Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor."*

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Go Shine Bright

It's a time for you to shine bright with the ideas the Holy Spirit has stirred you with. We believe in Connect Groups ministry. God creates a special dynamic when a small team gathers around a necessary task or a

shared passion, looks one another in the eye and asks, "It's up to us; what are we going to do about this?" Connect Groups celebrate and encourage the creativity and wisdom built into the members of the body of Christ. This free market style of doing Connect Groups unlocks your ideas.

As General George S. Patton said; *"Tell them what to do, but don't tell them how to do it; you will be amazed at their ingenuity."*

We look forward to standing amazed at the great ideas unlocked by your Connect Group. Use your flexibility to good effect. Connect Groups can plan and execute much quicker and can make adjustments on the fly easier than large Groups. They can also come to consensus quicker and rally more easily with greater unity than large Groups. Of course, honest sharing and deep relationships are more easily fostered in 'safe' Connect Groups. Therefore, plan to make it your priority. Just as the Holy Spirit grants distinct visions to certain individuals, He also allows different Groups to see things from a unique point of view. Your Group will be given unique ministry opportunities that evolve from the contributions and personalities who make up your Group. We look forward to your success and will celebrate and pray for it with you.

We Appreciate You

As an eldership at The Bridge we are excited to see you run with the passions in your hearts. The release of the ministry through the lives and hands of members is a pleasure for us. To this we were called. It is also a mark of how much we trust and believe in you and the Lords work in your heart. You have a God-given destiny that it is our honor to participate in. Yet we are also aware that the role we have been called to perform, includes the oversight of the ministry we will give an account for. Paul in his last address to the Ephesian elders gives us an insight into what this kind of oversight role protects members from. Oversight protects against savage wolves whose personal hunger will not spare the flock. It is also supposed to guard against those who emerge in selfish ambition to gather members away from a focus on Jesus and the vision of the church. They are the kind of people who draw people away.

Acts 20:28-31 *“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!”*

Please make sure that in all the excitement of the Lords leading and a successful Connect Group you keep a heart to protect the people for whom Jesus died and that you support our church vision. We are praying for you for rich satisfaction and great fruit. In our prayers, our hearts go out to you. Thank you for your leadership and may Jesus Christ be exalted through our ministry now and forever.

Section 4

Appendix

- Connect Group Leader Honour Code

Connect Group Leader Honour Code

As an essential part of The Bridge's 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 The Bridge.

While serving the Body of Christ as a Connect Group leader at The Bridge, you pledge to present a good appearance at all times. In both attire and behavior, you should strive to demonstrate Biblical standards in all situations.

Others perceive Christ through His people. Our conduct should never be an embarrassment to Christ, but should exemplify the best qualities of a mature believer and servant/leader.

The Bridge Connect Group leaders are to maintain a disciplined life of Bible reading, prayer and other spiritual disciplines. You must also refrain from all behaviors which might cause Christ to grieve and others to stumble. While we desire you to be led by the Holy Spirit in these things, the scriptures clearly list such things as anger, malice and malicious talk, greed, rage, sexual immorality, hatred, idolatry, slander, factions, and sedition as the "to be avoided".

These should be avoided as we are strengthened by the grace of God, which teaches us to say no to ungodliness in any form.

More modern outward issues to be avoided may include pornography, smoking or chewing tobacco, illegal drugs, along with the age-old profanity, gambling, drunkenness or enough alcoholic beverage to cause drunkenness, dishonest gain, to name a few.

While Jesus did say that the state of our hearts was a greater measure of our status before God, He did not say that the things mentioned above were unimportant. By providing an example in speech and action, we encourage others to grow in Christ and become servant/leaders themselves. This is a way of life measured by the heart and commitment of each leader in The Bridge family.

We should regard it as an essential part of our development, not as an imposition or restriction. Please do not willingly or knowingly do anything to damage the reputation or ministry of The Bridge. Support

The Bridge and its leaders in its mission and intent. If you have disagreements with something or someone go directly to the people involved or their overseer. Do not participate in gossip or slander. Be caught saying only useful, encouraging or complimentary things behind peoples backs.

Have as much fun as you can while pursuing the ideas and dreams you have for Connect Groups. The more we want to do things the less they feel like work.

I declare that I have read the honour code and will abide with the Bridge philosophy.

I have attended the Connect Group Leaders Training and have read through the manual.

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____