



CONNECTION GROUP

LEADER PLAYBOOK

2024 • 2025

To our incredible Connection Group Leaders,

I want to start by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you. You truly are an answer to the prayer mentioned in Luke 10:2 - “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” And guess what? God has answered that prayer by providing you! We pray this every day at 10:02 am, and it’s incredible to witness how God has blessed us with leaders like you.

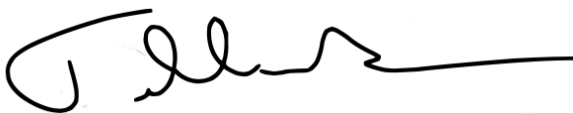
I hope you find immense joy in witnessing the harvest happen within your Connection Group. Your dedication and commitment to creating a sense of family, applying God’s Word, and reaching out to others are truly inspiring.

As our church experiences exponential growth in Ankeny, it’s evident that we will need more exceptional Connection Group leaders like you. With new leaders, comes the necessity for clear communication and understanding of our vision. That’s where this playbook comes in – it’s designed to be your guide to success as a Connection Group leader. Just like a playbook for a basketball or football team, following these “plays” will lead us all to victory.

Remember, you are not alone in this journey. We are here to support and encourage you every step of the way. If you ever encounter a need or require assistance, don’t hesitate to reach out. Together, we will continue to grow and make a difference in the lives of those God has placed in our Connection Groups.

Once again, thank you for all that you do. Your dedication is making a significant impact here in Ankeny and the surrounding communities. May God bless you abundantly and fill you with great encouragement as you serve Him faithfully.

With extreme gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Todd Wallace', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

*Todd Wallace and the Elders
Keystone Church of Ankeny*

THE 3 AIMS

A Connection Group Leader's mission is to create environments conducive for joyful, spiritual family, where Christ-followers are actively applying God's word, and living on mission. Practically speaking, these values are lived out in 3 ways:

BE A FAMILY

- Healthy families spend time with each other
- Healthy families share food with each other
- Healthy families get real with each other
- Healthy families take care of each other
- Healthy families encourage and challenge each other
- Healthy families serve together (Serve Our City)

APPLY THE WORD

- Facilitate weekly discussions around the sermon using the “script” outline as a guide. Every Sunday, “CG Weekly Edition” will follow this outline, and will get you started down that road.
- Always get to practical next steps

PLANT NEW CONNECTION GROUPS

- In the same way healthy churches plant new churches, healthy connection groups plant new connection groups.
- The key to planting new CGs is having leaders who are ready to lead. There fore, always be looking for Co-Leaders!
- From day 1, lead your group to pray about where God might use your group to plant a new connection group.
- Invite people to your group!
- Encourage your group members to invite people to your group!

A TYPICAL LIFE-CYCLE OF A CONNECTION GROUP

While every leadership experience is different, there is a typical life-cycle that most connection groups will go through:

1st year: Create “Spiritual Family”

2nd year: Grow in “Life Application”
Focus: Pray for / Seek Co-Leaders

3rd year: Live out “Life on Mission”
Focus: Empower Co-Leaders

4th year: Rest on “Sabbatical”

This life-cycle isn't a policy or a rule, but a guide. Naturally, there will be variations that emerge, and these will be discussed and addressed on a case-by-case basis.

SUCCESSFUL CG LEADERS DO THESE 7 THINGS:

1. Take Attendance.

Submit group attendance every week through the Church Center App. Including contact information for visitors and new members enables you to follow up and make meaningful connections.

2. Share Responsibilities.

The healthiest CGs share responsibilities and empower new leaders. Don't try to do it all yourself. This is also critical to being able to plant new CGs!

3. Communicate Regularly.

Have a way to communicate with the whole group and aim to make meaningful connections with individuals in the group outside of your normal group time.

4. Model the One-Anothers.

The New Testament lists 59 one-another instructions. Successful groups will experience many of these often!

5. Reach Out for Help.

If there is ever a time that you need something or have a question, reach out to the Support Team. We are here to help!

6. Create Intentional Spaces for Relationships.

Do whatever will best facilitate family and connection!

7. Keep Jesus the Focus!

HOW TO LEAD YOUR FIRST MEETING

INTRODUCTIONS:

- Leaders:
 - Tell your brief God story
 - Share your passion for Jesus and His Kingdom (Help them to see your heart!)
 - Talk about your commitment to the group
- Let each person share about themselves:
 - Name, job / year in school, how long have you been at Keystone, and ask a question like, “what has your attention in life right now?”

THE VISION:

- Share the a brief overview of the vision behind connection groups:
 - Vision: To Help People Know and Follow Jesus through:
 - Spiritual Family - Be a Family
 - Life Application - Apply the Word
 - Life on Mission - Plant new Connection Groups

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Help them to know what it looks like to flourish in your group! People in your group want to know what will be asked of them, and what a typical week or month will look like. Share with them info about:
 - Monthly rhythms and typical meeting layout
 - Food plans (Meals / Desserts)
 - How you will handle childcare
 - Schedule for socials / men and women splits
 - Serving one another, and serving our city

HOW WE WILL COMMUNICATE:

- Weekly prayer requests
- Use the “Church Center” app for communications (or another option)

SHARE RESPONSIBILITIES... SOME AREAS COULD INCLUDE:

- Handling administrative details and communications
- Writing down and distributing prayer requests
- Scheduling out meals, desserts, snacks
- Planning social events
- Hosting the connection group in their home
- Sharing leadership

THE ASK:

- Best way to create spiritual families:
 - Time - Come every week! - We want this to be the highlight of your week!
 - Vulnerability - Ask them to be open and honest, and commit, as leaders, to be pace-setters in this.
 - Share about the Biblical instruction of the One-Anothers.

OTHER HOW-TOS:

HOW TO GET PEOPLE INTO YOUR GROUP:

- **Recruit.** Recruiting can happen at any time, and is the most effective way to get people into your group. Ask your co-workers. Ask the people at your gym. Ask your neighbors. Ask people during our meet and greet times. People love being invited!
- **Respond to email requests from Church Center.** 3 times a semester, we host a 3 step process called the Keystone Pathway to help people get plugged into this church. After every Step 2, each person who attends receives an invitation to try out a connection group. Respond as quickly as you can when people reach out. Don't be offended if they don't come back! We tell everyone to visit multiple groups.

HOW TO STRUCTURE A CONNECTION GROUP GATHERING:

- **Define your monthly rhythm.** There are plenty of variations in ways that leaders lay out their groups. Share with your group what a typical month will look like.
- **Divide a typical night into thirds.** You have freedom to change things up, but most CGs spend about a third of the time hanging out, a third of the time discussing the sermon, and a third of the time getting life updates, taking requests, and praying together.
- **Food always makes CGs better.** Whether it's dinner, light snacks, or dessert, food creates the family-style environment that helps gel the group together.
- **Watch the clock.** Decide beforehand the length of time you want to officially meet as a group. Most groups meet somewhere between 1 ½ to 2 ½ hours. End on time. This gives people permission to leave if they want to, though oftentimes they'll stay and keep hanging out!
- **Make relationships the key.** If you're going to lean too hard one way or another, lean towards being too relational. The most successful CGs are the ones that do a really good job at being a family.

SPIRITUAL FAMILY

HOW TO CULTIVATE A HEALTHY SPIRITUAL FAMILY CULTURE:

- **Make the "One Anothers" the core of what you do.** Continually get creative on how to implement the 59 one-another commands in your group.
- **Schedule intentional time for relationships.** Whether it's weekly time around dinner, a guy / girl split night, or a once a month social gathering, be intentional about letting go of the schedule and just hanging out. Do whatever will best facilitate family and connection!
- **Create a way to communicate during the week.** Start by using the Church Center app. If necessary, use other common methods of communication: email, text threads, GroupMe threads, etc.
- **Serve Together.** Does someone have a need in your group? Go meet that need together! At least once a semester, serve with your group in one of our partner organizations. Utilize the "Serve Our City" material provided.

LIFE APPLICATION

HOW TO HELP PEOPLE APPLY THE WORD:

- **Successful discussions usually center around these main points: (Use the CG WEEKLY EDITION as a guide to help you get started. Tweak as you see fit!)**
 - Read and review the basic background of the text.
 - What were the major points of the sermon? Where do you find each point in the Bible?
 - Do you understand what each point means?
 - How should we live this out this week?
- **The goal is to get *THEM* to talk, not you.** You're not teaching a Bible study class, you are leading a small group discussion. The best Connection Groups are led by people who do a good job of getting others in the group to talk.
- **Never skip the application.** You might not get to every discussion question each week, but always ask the application questions. And if you really want to see your group apply the Word, ask the following week about what they said they were going to do the previous week.
- **Split the group.** Sometimes people will talk more if you split the group into even smaller groups. Oftentimes people will go deeper when you split the group into guys and girls. This should be a relatively regular practice!

HOW TO HANDLE CHILDCARE:

- **Decide on if and how you will host children.** Following are suggestions to help you think creatively about childcare:
 - Hire a babysitter by combining resources.
 - Rotate two people together to watch the kids, either at home or at another house. This approach offers a secondary opportunity for fellowship!
 - Partner with another group that meets on a different night to swap childcare responsibilities.
 - Have an occasional "Family" night where children can experience the community created within a Connection Group.
 - Utilize guy/girl splits to help offset childcare needs (all men one week, all women the next week).

LIFE ON MISSION

HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOUR GROUP IS READY TO MULTIPLY:

- **Not a group.** A group that has 0-5 people on the roster is not yet a group. We will not start a new group that does not already have 2 leaders and a core of 4. Main objective here is to recruit.
- **Room to grow.** A group that has 6-10 people regularly attending has room to grow. Main objective here is to invest in relationships.
- **The sweet spot.** A group that has 10-16 people regularly attending is healthy as long as it's continuing to grow. Main objective here is to empower others to take on responsibilities and future leadership.
- **Ready to plant!** A group that has 16+ people regularly attending should be thinking about multiplying. Main objective here is to raise up new leaders.

HOW TO PLANT A NEW CONNECTION GROUP:

- **Decide the best time to plant.** *Most often, groups will be planted in conjunction with a sabbatical rotation.* But if Jesus brings a ton of people to your group, it will be a good idea to have a plan in place before that time (see above).
- **Raise up Co-Leaders.** Fill out the Leader recommendation form.
- **Encourage your co-leaders to recruit a core team.** New leaders should recruit at least 4 other people to be part of their committed core.
- **Give your co-leaders the freedom to recruit from your group.** The best core team is one that has people you already know and have invested in. Be open handed with the people in your group!

SABBATICAL

HOW TO BE READY FOR YOUR SABBATICAL YEAR:

- **Have Co-Leaders ready to lead in your absence.** If you don't have leaders ready to take your group, wait a year to go on sabbatical. The best thing for your group, in almost every case, is to keep the group together!
- **Give time for your Co-Leaders to lead.** Be intentional about giving your co-leaders opportunities to lead in discussions, event planning, shepherding, etc.
- **Cast the vision for returning to the group in January.** Explain the vision to start a new connection group the following year with some of the current members. The best way to plant a new group the following year is to plant with people you already know and have already invested in. Plan to return to your group as a participant, or even as co-leaders.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SABBATICAL YEAR:

- **Be Intentional with resting.** As leaders, you know that it will be very easy to let other things fill up your time. Resist this urge by learning about and practicing what biblical resting looks like.
- **Return to your previous group the second semester.** The best way to plant a new group the following year is to plant with people you already know and have already invested in. Plan to return to your group as a participant, or even as co-leaders. In some cases, it may be better to take the second semester off as well. Feel the freedom to do so.
- **Strategize with your previous group on how to plant a new group together.** Doing so will give your previous group ownership in the mission to plant new groups.

PUT THESE KEY DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR:

CG Leader Launch	August 18th	5:30-7:30 pm
Kickoff Week	September 10th	
First-Year Leader Meeting	October 13th	Following 2nd Service
All Leader Meeting	November 10th	Following 2nd Service
First-Year Leader Meeting	Early February	Following 2nd Service
All Leader Meeting	Early March	Following 2nd Service
Final Week of meeting	First Week of May	
Welcome to Sabbatical	Mid May	



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keystonelife.com/CGRESOURCES