

Connection Groups FAQ

St. John Berlin - 2025

What is a Connection Group?

Our vision for Connection Groups is: *Connection Groups connect Christians to other Christians, Christians closer to Christ, and non-Christians to Connection Groups.*

It's been said that Connection Groups are a community 'where life meets truth.' To expand on that, Connection Groups are a community of 3 to 15 members who meet regularly to 'do the Christian life deeply together.' They walk a fine line between a Bible study and a support group; it's biblical teaching applied to life.

Connection Groups have the goals of forming deep, meaningful relationships with each other, discussing God's Word and applying it to each other's lives, supporting and caring for one another, and praying together. They exist to connect Christians closer together and closer to Christ and also to connect seekers in our community to Christ and to the Church. They are safe places to share your life's joys and struggles. They are a relaxed, non-threatening environment for Bible study.

Who are Connection Groups for?

You! And, well...everyone. Jesus Christ died and rose for all people; this message is for all people; and Connection Groups teach and live this essential message. We all should be hearing it, living it, and sharing it all the time, and Connection Groups offer you an avenue to do just that.

Why join a Connection Group?

Because your greatest needs are God's gifts of forgiveness and eternal life in heaven. These amazing gifts are only received through faith. And a Connection Group will strengthen your faith as you spend more time in God's Word and prayer. Additionally, when you join a Connection Group, you become part of an intimate community of believers who'll encourage you in your faith, hold you accountable to your faith, and work together to live out your faith through serving and evangelizing to others.

How long do Connection Group meetings last?

Their length varies depending on the Group. Most Groups will meet for an hour-and-a-half to two-and-a-half hours.

How frequently do Connection Groups meet?

Some Groups meet every week while other Groups meet every-other-week.

What does a Connection Group meeting look like?

Connection Group meetings can vary depending on the Group. Most of the time, however, they begin with some informal conversation time; often, snacks are provided during this time. After that, the Group usually comes together more intentionally with an ice breaker.

Next, most Groups will spend 30-60 minutes in Bible study; don't expect a lecture but rather a discussion about God's Word and how it applies to your life. Finally, most Groups end with a time of prayer for individuals, for the Group, and for the community. Sometimes, there is more informal conversation time at the end.

What's the Biblical basis for Connection Groups?

First, the Bible tells us over and over again that we should be meeting with other Christians for the study of God's Word and prayer; Connection Groups provide another opportunity, outside of church, to do that. On top of that, we see that Jesus operated in a Connection Group-like setting – he served as the leader of twelve disciples. The early church operated in Connection Groups; they didn't meet in large buildings but rather as smaller communities in member's houses. Some other verses that support Connection Groups are: Proverbs 27:17, Matthew 18:20, 1 Thessalonians 2:8, 2 Timothy 2:2, Hebrews 10:24-25, and James 5:16.

What's the purpose of Connection Groups?

Connection Groups are designed to meet three specific needs that all people have. They provide: a community of believers to encourage, strengthen, and hold you accountable to your faith; a chance to deepen your knowledge of God and how he wants you to live; and an opportunity to do evangelism.

What does prayer look like in Connection Groups?

Prayer is very important for Connection Groups – it's such a privilege and joy to be able to talk to God! All Connection Groups will pray, and while it might look different for each Group, most have some things in common. Generally, Connection Groups will go around the room and ask for prayer requests. At that time the leader will pray for the specific requests and will ask if anyone else would like to pray. The leader will also send out a list of the prayer requests and encourage the Group members to all be praying for each other throughout the week.

How do Connection Groups facilitate community?

Community is a very important part of Connection Groups, and each Group will work hard to facilitate deep, meaningful relationships among the Group members. This is done through informal conversation time and icebreakers during the regular Connection Group meeting. Connection Groups are also encouraged to meet outside of their regularly scheduled time, specifically to foster community; this will look different for each Group depending on the activities your Group enjoys doing.

How do Connection Groups facilitate evangelism?

Connection Groups provide an excellent environment for evangelism to flourish. First, all members are encouraged to invite others into the Group; it's often less intimidating to join a Connection Group meeting than it is to come to church. Second, Connection Groups provide the opportunity to do evangelism together with other Christians. Finally,

Connection Groups may even practice doing evangelism together or study it in their Bible study time.

What kinds of Bible studies do Connection Groups do?

Connection Groups can study anything as long as it relates to the Bible and our Christian faith. Specifically, Connection Groups are encouraged to do studies that apply to the lives of their members. Connection Group studies are also more discussion based than they are teachings or lectures. Ultimately, the topics for study are up to the Group and their leader.

If I go to church, should I still join a Connection Group?

Yes, we strongly encourage you to still join a Connection Group. Groups offer something different than large group church gatherings do. They provide a greater opportunity to make Christian friends who will encourage you and hold you accountable to your faith. They also offer an opportunity to ask questions and deepen your faith in a different way. Finally, the focus of a Connection Group is on the application of God's Word to your life, and they are able to do so more pointedly and personally than the large group church gathering.

If I go to my Connection Group, should I still go to church?

Yes, we strongly encourage you to still come to the church service regularly. Large group church gatherings offer something different than Connection Groups do. First, God's Word is presented in a different way – sermons do more teaching than Connection Group studies do. Second, church gatherings offer the sacrament of Holy Communion – there is no substitute for receiving Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins. Third, the church service offers you the opportunity to sing and to praise God together with other believers. Fourth, the large church gathering connects you to an even larger body of believers.

Will I have service opportunities as part of a Connection Group?

Yes! Connection Groups are encouraged to regularly serve in their community and/or church. As you serve together as a Group, you'll have opportunities to share Christ's love with those around you.

What does it mean that Connection Groups present a 'safe space'?

Connection Groups are a place where you can feel comfortable being your real self and sharing both your struggles and your victories without fear of being judged or ridiculed. Your Group members are there to support and encourage you and hold you accountable to your faith, not judge you, gossip about you, put you down, or talk about you behind your back. These rules will be made clear to the Group.

Are there food and beverages at the Connection Group meetings?

Our Connection Group leaders are encouraged to have food and beverages present at their Connection Group meetings, but it isn't guaranteed that they will. Some Groups will have

snacks, others may provide a full meal, and still others may not offer anything to eat or drink at all. Ultimately, the decision about food is left up to the Group itself.

What if I don't have time to join a Connection Group?

First, know that we offer Connection Groups on various days and various times; take a look at your schedule – is there anything that can be rearranged a bit to make time for a Connection Group? Second, we offer Connection Groups that meet with various frequencies – weekly and every-other-week; perhaps you could join a Group that meets less frequently. Finally, we strongly encourage you to join a Group, even if it means missing out on something else in life, because we believe that it will be incredibly beneficial for your faith and relationship with Christ, and when it comes down to it, that is really the only thing that truly matters – faith is the only thing that receives the one thing that transcends this life: the eternity in paradise God offers us through his Son.

If I join a Connection Group, am I making a commitment?

In short: no. If you're hesitant about joining a Group, we would encourage you to just try it out. Sign up for a Group and attend a few meetings to see what you think. We believe that you will not only find it beneficial for your faith, but that you'll also enjoy the experience and want to stay on long-term.

What should I know before going to my first Connection Group meeting?

First, we would just like to thank you for trying out a Connection Group! You should know that you'll almost certainly encounter some really great people who care very much for you. Our leaders have been trained to be welcoming and to make sure new members feel comfortable. You should also know that God will be present and will be working through your Group to grow faith! Finally, we ask that you go in with an open mind; a Connection Group may not be what you're expecting it to be, but it will be beneficial for you and your faith!

What if I'm shy; are Connection Groups still for me?

Absolutely! Our leaders are trained to be welcoming and to help you fit in. Additionally, there is no pressure to participate. Take as much time as you need to get comfortable with your Group!

Can I trust my Connection Group leader to keep something confidential?

Yes. Connection Group leaders are trained to keep confidential things said to them in confidence. The only exception is that if you tell them that you are intending to harm yourself or others; in this case, he or she is obligated to alert the proper authorities.

What if there aren't any Groups that fit my schedule?

If we don't have a Group offering during the time that you have free to participate in a Group, we would encourage you to contact Pastor Rob (920-539-4603 or pastor@stjohnberlin.org). He will do his best to work with you to start a new Group at the time that would work for you.