

Connect Group Leader Training Manual



Life Christian Church – The Beginning

On March 12, 1979, I was praying before I went to sleep and the Lord gave me a vision. I saw a sea of people who were holding Bibles and taking notes as they were being taught. As I looked to the front, I saw that I was teaching them the Word of God. Between the masses of people were aisles filled with hurting, sick people in wheelchairs and stretchers and I saw the people who had been listening to the Word get out of their seats and begin to minister healing to them.

I asked the Lord, “What is this?” He said that this was a church - His church that He wanted me to start in St. Louis, Missouri. As the vision ended, the Lord said, “Rick, if you will be faithful and obedient, what you see will take place.”

At the time of this vision, I was pastoring a small church in South Carolina. I had no plans to come back to St. Louis where I had been raised.

When I saw in this vision the sea of humanity, instantly there was put in my heart a passion to see the masses of lost and hurting people come to Jesus. Since that time, evangelism has been a driving force in my life. I’ve been associated with churches and Christians my whole life who were satisfied with a small harvest. The churches were more like a social club, heaping all the blessings and fruit upon the church rather than seeing the vision God gave to Abraham, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”

What God has blessed us with, I believe, we owe to those who are lost without Christ. The church must exist for a cause bigger than herself, the cause of Christ. The church is not a country club where people join to enjoy the programs and facilities, but rather, the church is a base station for reaching the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The church is not an organization, but an organism – alive, vibrant, and functioning as the Spirit gives life and power.

The church must function in the power of the Spirit. The Kingdom of God always comes with power. Where the true Gospel is preached, it should be accompanied with the power of Christ to bring freedom and healing in people’s lives. The majority of men and women will never be converted by intellectual argument. What they need is a church (a people) or a Christian who will show them the love of God and His power to change their life.

In the vision, I saw all the people living as disciples. "Disciples" is a key word for Life Christian Church. As mere church members, Christians will never make an impact on their world. Every believer must study to show himself approved as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, being able to rightly divide the Word of Truth. **(2 Tim 2:15)** Every believer must be committed to their own spiritual growth. They cannot mature them by messages alone, but we are deeply committed to the spiritual progress of all disciples a LCC! The messages from the pulpit of LCC are not intended to do the complete job but they will help to get a person started, keeping them on the right path, challenging and inspiring them to live fully for Christ.

We are committed at Life Christian Church to provide a plan that anyone can plug into (at whatever level of spiritual maturity they are presently) and be disciplined fully into what God wants for their life. The Lord spoke this word to me years ago, "Rick, I have called you, not to be a dictator of people's faith, but a helper of their joy." In other words, we want to disciple people to Jesus, not to ourselves.

In the vision, the multitudes in the Body of Believers got up and ministered to one another. I believe the role of spiritual leadership is to equip and then mobilize people for the work of the ministry. We believe every Christian has a distinct calling and ministry in the church and in their world to do the works of Jesus themselves and minister healing, hope, love and to help the lost, the hurting and the sick all around them.



Connect

Vision of Connect

To build a leadership factory that will sustain growth at all levels in our church.

What will this do?

- **Fuel the overall vision of LCC**
 - Grow and strengthen all other ministries as well as the church.
 - Increase retention in the church as a result of meaningful relationships being built (Proverbs 27:17 NKJV).
 - Connect becomes the incubator for all our future leaders.

How will this happen?

- **We must start building momentum now**
 - Focus on it and talk about it.
 - Get excited about it.
 - Start communicating early with your groups.
 - **KEY!** = Know you're supposed to be here.
- **We must continually use Connect as a tool to promote church grow**
 - Always be looking for new people to plug into your group, both in and out of the church.
 - Get familiar with the other groups and their leaders to help direct new people to a group that best fits them.
 - Have Connect brochures on hand to give out when people are interested.
- **We will help people realize the plan God has for their life**
 - This is where the greatest reward is for all.
 - God has a church for everyone to call home and a work for them to do there. We must assist them down the path of discovering God's plan for themselves.
- **Connect becomes a perpetual system for leadership development/discipleship**
 - Group members rising up to become interns and group leaders; group leaders rising up to become team leaders; and team leaders going to levels unreached at this point (i.e., Dr. David Cho of Seoul, Korea, has 1,000,000 members and 23,000 small groups in his church; the largest presently in the world).



Connect

People Skills

Having great people skills is more than just being outgoing. It's learning to become a master communicator and relationship builder. Every great group dynamic has people that are excellent at this.

Effective Communication

- Communicate regularly (weekly) with your group and team leader through phone, e-mail, and possibly even face-to-face meetings when necessary.
- Have an organized communication system (i.e., weekly call lists, e-mail distribution, etc.)
- **Important note:** People need to feel connected to their leader and what is going on.

Making a Great First Impression (you only get one chance)

- **Always smile.** It's the best way to put people at ease right away. It also makes people respond with a smile, which, in turn, puts them in a favorable mood.
- **Maintain eye contact when talking with people.** Don't get distracted by other things going on. Staying focused on the speaker tells him/her, what they have to say is important to you. If you must break away when someone's talking to you make sure to ask their permission first (See "Art of Listening").
- **Remember people's first names right away.** Associate people's names with people whom you already know by that name. Make it a point to refer to them by their first name several times, early on.
- **Establish common ground with people quickly** (see Art of Asking Questions). People will start to warm up to you right away if you find common interests to talk about. It's not hard to do, but you have to uncover those interests by asking questions. Try to have certain questions and responses prepared ahead of time, if it helps you.
- **Things to remember after first and second meeting**
 - First meeting: first name, occupation, # of kids (if any), and how long have they attended LCC.
 - Second meeting: hobbies, years married (if married), details about their work, how they came to LCC, and kids names (if they're present at the group).

Create a Positive Environment to Help Set the Stage

- **Have a clean home (area) with good traffic flow.** Congestion and clutter are bad. Have plenty of comfortable seating when the group starts.
- **Keep conversations light in the beginning.** Try to get people laughing and feeling comfortable.
- **Try to have snacks and drinks, if possible.** This could be a great excuse to communicate with people between meetings about what to bring.
- Make it a point to **introduce people in the group to one another** and instigate multiple conversations. You want to avoid having a silent atmosphere when people are arriving.
- **Once the group starts:**
 - Start by thanking everyone for joining your group, and let them know how excited you are to have them there.
 - Go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves (i.e., names, occupation, kids, married, time at LCC, etc.) Lead off introductions with yourself in the first meeting.
 - **KEY!** = Ask them to say what they're hoping to get out of being in the group. Make sure to listen closely and possibly take notes of their answers. Are they looking to build meaningful relationships, get more involved at church, grow spiritually etc. Next, ask yourself how you're going to help them get what they want.

Provide a Secure Environment

- Explain the confidentiality policy.

Confidentiality Policy:

Anything said in the meeting is not to be repeated outside of the meeting, but the group leader has the responsibility to share important information with the team leader or pastor.

- Lead the way in discussing difficult issues (see "Leadership"). It's good for people to see that their leader is willing to let their guard down. Leaders are always the first ones to extend trust.

The Art of Listening (Proverbs 21:11 TMB)

- A good listener always winds up far ahead of a good talker in winning the affections of people.
- Lean toward the speaker and listen intently while making good eye contact and maintaining a comfortable distance.
- Stick to the speaker's subject and don't interrupt.
- Ask the speaker detailed questions regarding what they are talking about. This is a high form of flattery, and it lets them know you are listening.
- Pay attention to more than just words (i.e., body language, mannerisms, facial expressions, etc.) Words can sometimes be misleading when it comes to how people are actually feeling. You must learn to be intuitive toward other people and their feelings.

The Art of Praising

- Understand that people in our society today are greatly underencouraged.
- Always be specific and authentic in your praises.
- Focus on inspiring confidence in others as often as possible. You are eliminating their feelings of being embarrassed by what they might say. This will help them feel comfortable with themselves and more open with you.
- Empowerment is one of the greatest things we can do for someone else. God doesn't just suggest it, He commands it (Proverbs 3:27 NKJV).
- *"What a worthwhile skill one possesses when they develop the art of making another human being feel better about themselves."*

The Art of Asking Questions

- If you maneuver people into talking about themselves, they will like you very much. This is accomplished by asking them questions about themselves.
- Ask "involvement questions," not just short answer questions (i.e., Ask "Why did you decide to move there?" not just, "Where do you live?")
- Ask questions about things people like to talk about. In general, avoid things people don't like talking about.
- Asking questions leads people and draws them in, while making statements only tells people what YOU think and can push them away. If they come up with an answer, they own it, but if you give it to them, they may question it.

The Art of Controlling the Group

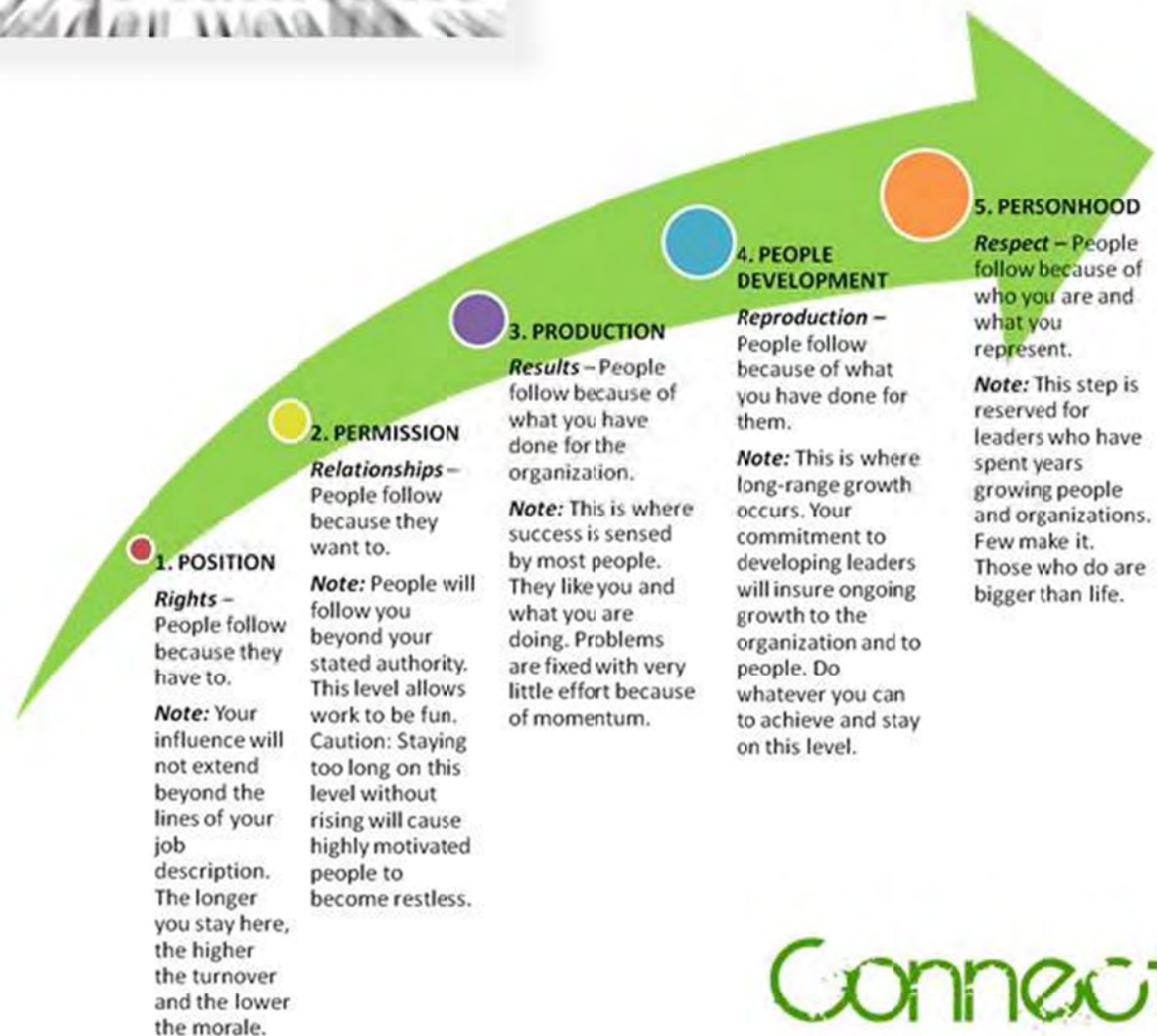
- You must win the support of the group early on. In order to do this, you must first win over each person individually (see “First Impressions”).
- Make sure to stay on the topic of discussion. If things get off track, reel them back in with questions.
- Be very sensitive to staying on time. If people see that you are starting and stopping when you say you are going to, they will see you have control over the group.
- If you really have control, you don’t need to proclaim it.

The Art of Correction

- Always approach people in private the first time you need to correct an issue. When doing so, start on a positive, correct the issue, then end on a positive. If this isn’t effective, consult your team leader immediately.
- The most common issue that will need to be addressed is “over-talking”. Some people just love to hear themselves talk and love to talk about themselves. You can skillfully use questions to stop them and give the floor to another person. If they don’t get the hint and it persists, then address it with them in private.
- In rare cases you may correct openly in the group, but ONLY if necessary.



Five Levels of Leadership



Leadership (Influence)

To help others realize their God-given potential is one of the most fulfilling and noble purposes to which one can devote their life. Leadership is a lifestyle, and to live one's life in such a way that is focused on developing others will ultimately enrich our own lives beyond measure.

It Starts with You

- Be committed to personal growth (no tree is fully grown).
- Have a plan for personal growth (books, CDs, conferences and training sessions, take notes, reflection time). Also, don't be afraid to invest money and time in this area. It is never a wasted cause.
- Pray for wisdom (Proverbs 8:11 NKJV).
- Always have a great attitude; be excited.
- Be consistent. People need to know that their leader is unwavering.
- Have your priorities in order (i.e., God, family, career, ministry, work, etc.) Understand that life naturally brings us more than we can reasonably devote ourselves to.
- Become a leader who is worthy of a following—a person of integrity, whose life is exemplary of the convictions they hold to be true.

Learn to Identify Potential Leaders

- Leaders will typically identify themselves early.
- Look for people with **desire**, people skills and practical leadership skills.
- Make sure to talk with your team leader about leaders you've identified.
- All great leaders have the ability to see the potential in others—often before they see it in themselves—and then help others realize that potential.

Developing an Intern

- Allow your intern to help facilitate the meeting, organize materials, and communicate with the group. Try to give them small projects early on. (i.e., open in prayer, share a few encouraging thoughts, or even communicate with the group about a food list)
- Your interns should be key influencers in your group. Let them help you by saying things you want to say so you don't have to say them. This gives them an opportunity to develop and allows you to reserve your words for things that you want to personally communicate.

Invest in Potential Leaders

- You must treat potential leaders differently than the rest of the group.
- Invest the proper time with emerging leaders outside of the group (i.e., one-on-one mentoring, more frequent communication, etc.)
- Always keep them in the loop on things. Find reasons to share information with them before you share it with the group.
- Listen to the People! Great leaders take the time to listen to and understand what their people want and need; then, they invest their time and energy toward making those things happen when it's for the good of the person and the organization.

Develop a “Do It First” Mentality

- Don't ask others to do what you are not willing to do.
- Be transparent. Be the first to discuss difficult issues. This shows that you are willing to extend trust first. You will receive it in return.
- Be supportive of your leadership.
 - Always stay positive about where things are going.
 - Support your leaders in the decisions they make.
 - Understand Connect is a work in progress, and we are always striving to make it better.
- Pray regularly for your leadership and also for those you lead.
- By choosing to lead a group you've already identified yourself as a person that has a “do it first” mentality.