

NEXT STEPS

As Connect Group Leaders, we help people identify and take their next step in their relationship with God, and these steps are often as unique as the members that make up our groups.

Some steps feel like huge milestones: salvation, water baptism, or becoming a Connect Group Co-Leader. Others are just as essential to spiritual growth and should be similarly celebrated: starting a daily Bible-reading plan, regularly attending a service, forgiving a past wrong, or simply making a difference in the life of someone at work or home.

As a leader, use this guide to complement your current Connect Group curriculum or activity and to spark discussion around identifying and taking next steps. Incorporate this guide into times of fellowship, group discussion, or one-on-one interactions.

Let conversation come naturally. Sharing what you've done, how you've grown, and where you want to continue growing are impactful ways to encourage others in their own walk.

Use all or portions of this guide. The goal is to equip you to help your group members take their next step.

Let's keep moving forward and growing together!

NEXT STEPS AT A GLANCE

Building Healthy Connection

1. Build Relationships: Share personal stories and identify where people are spiritually.
2. Testimonies: Share stories of life change to highlight potential next steps.
3. Accountability: Build healthy relationships and make deeper connections.

Identifying Next Steps

4. Bible reading: Encourage everyone to find a Bible-reading plan that works for them.
5. Prayer: Make "Pray First" a part of our daily lives. Prayer is our first response, not our last resort.
6. Influence: Look for daily opportunities to make a positive impact on those around us.
7. Water baptism: Discuss the importance of baptism. Help identify the next available baptism date.
8. Growth Track: Encourage others to learn more about God's plan for their life through attending the Growth Track.

Continue Taking Steps

9. Development: Identify potential Co-Leaders and have them help with your group.
10. Continual Growth: Identify and encourage new opportunities for growth.
11. Generosity: Be generous with random acts of kindness towards your group and encourage them to do the same for others.
12. What's Next? Define next steps beyond the current Connect Group semester.
13. Leadership: Encourage people to join the Dream Team (Connect Group Leadership or another serve opportunity).

NEXT STEPS IN-DEPTH

I. Build Relationships by Sharing Personal Stories

Create a welcoming atmosphere with plenty of opportunities for people to get to know and learn more about one another.

Potential Questions

- *How long have you been going to Capital?*
- *Why did you pick this group?*
- *What are you hoping God does in your life this semester?*
- *Icebreaker questions can also be a fun way to get to know one another (Example: If you could travel to one place in the world, where would it be and why?)*

LEADER TIP

Take notes about family members, testimonies, details you find important, etc., so you can pray specifically and develop a personal relationship with each group member.

2. Share Testimonies and Stories of Life Change to Highlight Next Steps

Stories are powerful, so start by sharing your testimony with the group. Each week, ask someone (as they feel comfortable) to share their testimony with the group. Highlight steps you took along your walk with God that helped you get to where you are now.

Potential Questions

- *What stood out to you about this week's testimony?*
- *How are you hoping to grow in your relationship with God this semester?*
- *How would you describe your current relationship with God?*
- *In what moment did God become real to you / did you begin your journey with Him?*

LEADER TIP

Testimonies are a great way to highlight important moments in our walk with God. Encourage people who have recently taken major steps in their faith and celebrate what God has done in their life. This encourages other group members to take steps and share their story.

TWO-MINUTE TESTIMONY

Think through the points below to help create a brief version of your testimony that's easily shared.

1) Before I Met Jesus

- List some of the challenges you faced prior to becoming a Christian.
- What emotions or struggles did you have at the time?

2) How I Met Jesus

- When did you decide to follow Jesus?
- When were you baptized?
- Who were some of the key people in your life that helped lead you to Jesus?

3) The Difference Jesus Makes

- List one or two important changes in your life since following Jesus.
- How is your life different now that you are following Jesus?
- How has your perspective changed since you started following Jesus?

3. Accountability through Healthy Relationships

We weren't meant to do life alone! Focus on the importance of connection, both to other members of the group and to the local church.

Potential Questions

- *Which Sunday service do you typically attend?*
- *Why is it important to gather with other believers for worship?*
- *How can we best support one another in this group?*
- *If you could really connect with God in a meaningful way, what one thing in your life do you think would improve the most? (What current area of your life would you like to see a change in? How would that change make your life better?)*

LEADER TIP

Have group members exchange phone numbers and call each other during the week to pray. This will provide an opportunity for your group members to connect and share on a deeper level. Make sure to add the roster for your group to the Connect Group Database if you haven't already.

4. Bible Reading

Encourage your group members to find and begin a daily Bible-reading plan that works for them.

Potential Questions

- *What Bible-reading plan do you use?*
- *What is the best time for you to read your Bible?*
- *What setting works best for you?*
- *What next steps could you take that would impact your life for the better?*

LEADER TIP

The One Year Bible offered through the Highlands App is a great resource, but there are many Bible-reading plans available on the Bible App and elsewhere. Encourage your group members to read through a plan together for support and accountability.

5. Prayer

Encourage your group members to “Pray First” by living a lifestyle that includes prayer as a first response rather than a last resort.

Potential Questions

- *What does your daily prayer life look like?*
- *What does having a “Pray First” mentality mean to you? How can you walk that out?*
- *Why do you think people feel uncomfortable praying with others or out loud?*
- *How can we grow in our prayer lives?*

LEADER TIP

A great way to learn more about prayer is to join us for Wednesday evening 6:13 Prayer or participate in the next prayer and fasting opportunity at Capital. “Pray First” bracelets are also available at the information booth and can help serve as a reminder to focus on living a lifestyle of prayer.

6. Positively Influence Those around Us

Discuss the importance our actions can have on those around us and how we can look for opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others.

Potential Questions

- *How can you share what you learn on Sundays or in your Connect Group with those at work, in your family, etc.?*
- *What opportunities do you currently have to make a difference in someone's life?*
- *How can we bring joy to the environments we are currently a part of?*
- *What role does forgiveness play in impacting others?*

LEADER TIP

Past messages from Pastor Rick are a great resource for someone who wants to learn more or needs help understanding specific topics.

7. Water Baptism

For more information on water baptism and to help you prepare for discussion, check out the Water Baptism Resource on the Ministries page of our website at <https://www.capitalonline.cc/adults/water-baptism>.

Potential Questions

- *Why is water baptism an important step in our relationship with God?*
- *What does the Bible say about water baptism?*
- *Why do you think some don't take this step?*
- *Have you been water baptized? If so, when?*
- *What has been your experience with water baptism?*

LEADER TIP

At Capital, we do baptisms the first Sunday of every month in all three services. If members in your group have not been water baptized or are being led to rededicate their lives to Jesus, this is a great opportunity for them to take this important step with the support of their Connect Group.

8. Growth Track

God created each of us with a purpose, and we should encourage everyone to discover theirs. The Growth Track is specifically designed to help people discover their unique gifts and talents so they can make a difference in the lives of others.

Potential Questions

- *When you hear the word “purpose” what comes to mind?*
- *How do you think your gifts and talents point to your God-given purpose in this life?*
- *Who has been through the Growth Track? What was your experience? What did you learn?*

LEADER TIP

Encourage your group members who’ve not already been through the Growth Track to attend. A great way to offer support is by attending with them or connecting them with someone else in your group who is interested in completing the Growth Track.

9. Identify Potential Co-Leaders

Fostering the leadership potential in your group members is an important part of leading a Connect Group. Give a leadership opportunity to a group member by having them share a devotional, lead prayer, or talk about what God is doing in their life.

Potential Questions

- *What makes someone a leader?*
- *Why do you think some people are hesitant to lead?*
- *Where do you have a natural connection or influence with others?*
- *What aspect of this Connect Group would be beneficial for you to incorporate in other areas of your life (e.g., Bible reading, prayer, accountability, etc.)? How would you go about doing that?*

LEADER TIP

Many people feel there’s a barrier preventing them from leadership roles. Our goal is to help them understand that they already have areas of influence in their life and can use what God has done in their own life to help someone else.

Allowing others to be a part of leading your group can help them overcome those barriers and realize they are leaders. For the rest of the semester, have someone different each week help lead the group. Talk to them before, help them prepare, and then encourage them after the group.

10. Identify New Opportunities for Growth

Encourage your group members to step out and participate in new experiences: Rooted, conferences, Wednesday 6:13 Prayer, etc. Their boldness will help them understand their God-given design, discover their purpose, and find where God wants them to continue growing.

Potential Questions

- *In what area of your life do you desire more spiritual, physical, and emotional growth?*
- *What in your life has kept you from going "all in"?*
- *What experiences and events at Capital helped you grow, and why do you think they made an impact on you?*
- *What at Capital have you not been a part of but think you should?*

11. Random Acts of Kindness

It's important that we identify and respond to the Holy Spirit when He prompts us to action. Encourage your group members to pay special attention to those around them and to focus their generosity through listening to the Holy Spirit.

Potential Questions

- *Why does God want us to be generous?*
- *Is generosity more than giving financial aid? What are other ways we can be generous toward others?*
- *Have you ever used a Random Acts of Kindness card? What was your experience and why did you choose to use it then?*
- *Have you ever had a "feeling" that God was leading you to do something for someone else? Describe that feeling and how you think we can better tune in to what God is prompting us to do.*
- *How can you make a difference in someone else's life this week?*

LEADER TIP

Discuss as a group and talk about how you can practically share the love of Jesus with others through simple gestures of kindness. Be creative and generate ideas that don't necessarily have to cost a lot of money but that show true kindness.

12. What's Next: Define Next Steps beyond the Small Group Semester

It's important to prepare your group members for success after Connect Group.

Potential Questions

- What has God done in your life this semester? (Compare this to what was said at the beginning of the semester.)
- What is your next step after this group?
- How can we stay connected once the Connect Group semester is over?
- What kind of Connect Group do you feel you should be a part of next semester? Is there something that would help challenge or grow your relationship with God, family, others, etc.?
- What do you think about leading a group of your own?

LEADER TIP

Ask your group members to share their next steps and help them identify where to go from here.

13. Encourage Small Group Leader Training

Share your story of becoming a Small Group Leader and how you've seen God move in your life through leading. Sharing your story will encourage those who may be interested in leading.

Remember not to pressure anyone into a next step. Encourage them and remind them of all that God wants to do in and through them. God will take care of the rest!

LEADER TIP

Have conversations about Connect Group Leader Training in a one-on-one setting with those you see leadership potential in. Invite them to join you at the next Connect Group Leader Training to prepare for the next semester.