

You Belong Here.

Discovering real community

As you heard today, this is Connect Group Sunday. What that means is that we place great importance in connecting with God, obviously, but also connecting with one another, as a community of followers of Jesus.

I want you to know that you belong here and we belong together!

Opening text: Acts 2:41-47

Here is the earliest snapshot of what the first church looked like:

- Believers gladly received the word of God and held on to what the Apostles taught.
- Believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and there were many miracles, signs and wonders
- There was great generosity and a genuine concern for those in need.
- They were together. There was a strong sense of ‘community’ among early believers:

V. 42^a – *they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and **fellowship***

V.44^a – *Now all who believed were **together***

V.46 – *continuing daily in one accord **in the temple** and breaking bread from **house to house.***

Early on they understood the power of coming together, growing together and doing life together. They met in the temple (Solomon’s porch – Acts 5:12) and from house to house

Hebrews 10:25 - *not forsaking the **assembling of ourselves together**, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

When referring to the Church, the New Testament uses metaphors such as “flock”, “body” with many members, “family” or “household of faith”, “army” etc.

Charles Spurgeon said,

“Some Christians try to go to heaven alone, in solitude. But believers are not compared to bears or lions who wander alone. Those who belong to Christ are sheep in this respect, that they love to get together. Sheep go in flocks, and so do God’s people”

Believers belong together. We were meant to live in relationship with other believers to fulfill the mission of the church: the expansion of the Kingdom of God. Have you ever noticed all those “*one another*” scriptures? All of them point to the fact that we are a community of believers, not isolated Christians.

So, the church is a relational concept. However, as a church grows it can also become impersonal and that is why the early church didn't just meet in the temple, but also in people's homes.

That is precisely what we do here at church: On Sunday we come to church but during the week, we meet in many homes spread throughout the community. We call those meetings Connect Groups.

5 reasons why Connect Groups are such a fantastic concept:

1. They are biblical

As we read, believers met in small groups to be with one another, learn and break bread.

2. They are missional

In **1 Corinthians 16:8** the Apostle Paul said that God had opened a great and effective door in Ephesus for the Gospel.

The **Amplified Bible** says, **V.8** ... "*a wide door of opportunity has opened to me there, a great and a promising one*".

However, when we read Acts 19, we see that such a 'wide door' was not a huge crusade or a mega-auditorium, but in fact a small gathering, a small group of 12 believers:

Acts 19:7 – *now the men were about 12 in all.*

It was small group but from there, Paul reached the whole of Asia Minor. I preached a message here a few years ago about how **great opportunities sometimes come in small packages**.

Our CG's are a door in the community. They are not inward-focused but outward focused. Every CG can be a soul-winning station, out in the community. Every CG can be an entry point for people into the Kingdom of God – not just the door we open on Sunday, here in Rowville.

Also, a CG is a great place to invite our non-Christian friends to. Meetings take place in a home – which is a neutral and non-threatening place.

Connect Groups are missional in nature.

3. They are a great place to grow spiritually

The Word time is a very important part of our CG agenda. We study God's word together, but with a focus on application of the teaching we share on the day.

You can learn by asking questions and through interaction with other believers. A lot of discovery happens during those times of discussion around the Bible.

Connect groups are a great place for discipleship and ultimately for the raising of new leaders.

4. They enable maximum participation

In a CG meeting everyone can have an active role. No one needs to be a spectator.

Connect Group life is hands-on, and everyone is involved:

1 Corinthians 14:26 - *How is it then, brethren? Whenever you **come together**, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.*

5. That is where ‘community’ happens.

Connect groups are designed to foster closer and more meaningful relationships among believers. It makes church more personal, more relational and more intimate.

It helps us all achieve a great sense of ‘belonging’.

I would like to encourage everyone to be part of one of our many Connect Groups. Please approach our Connect Group booth today, out in the dining area, or Ps Victor. Alternatively send a WhatsApp message to the church and ask Charlie to suggest a group near your home.