The Vision

CBC Community Groups exist to provide a platform for God’s people to grow, reach, and worship through a dual focus on the Great Commission and Greatest Commandment.

Great Commandment: “Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’ “The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”” (Mark 12:29–31, NASB95)

Great Commission; “But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”’ (Matthew 28:16–20, NASB95)

Grow: The process of maturity in the life of a believer is accomplished through many different avenues; however, the primary ingredients are Scripture, Prayer, Obedience and Biblical fellowship. Through God’s Word we discover that which is true as well as what to do. Through prayer we draw closer to the heart of God and bring before Him in a paradoxical combination of humility and boldness our praise and petitions. In obedience, we put into practice that which God’s Word calls us to. In Biblical Fellowship we engage in life together which is God’s idea not ours. Through giving proper attention to these ingredients we experience life in the body as God designed which results in the growth He desires. This can in part take place through the avenue of Community Groups.

Reach: CG’s offer a great opportunity for us to reach our neighbors, co-workers, friends, and acquaintances. Through a non-threatening environment and with diligence on our part God can use our groups to reach people who may not have as much interest in walking through the doors of our church. It’s very important for us to keep this focus due to the fact that it is tremendously difficult not to become isolated in our perspective and in doing so we forsake both the greatest command and commission placed upon the church. Reaching not only focuses on lost sheep but starving sheep as well. In other words, we should seek to use our Community Groups as an avenue to reach lost people with Gospel as well as believers who are not currently being fed as they desire.

Worship: No matter the degree of our intentions, if our efforts do not translate into genuine worship we miss the mark of glorifying god. Therefore, we should view our community groups as an opportunity to do that for which we were created, to Worship God.
The Structure

Small groups have been around in an influential manner since the 80’s and through the years have consisted of many forms and names. Nevertheless, in spite of the variance, the desire for God’s people to connect with one another and to mature in their faith is an ever present aspect in nearly all small group ministries. For this reason, CBC seeks not to create a small group ministry that will be intricately dictated at the expense of the creativity that is so often key in a ministry’s success. Rather, the Community Groups of CBC will be afforded a degree of measured and evaluated independence with an end towards seeing God’s people connect with one another and mature in faith. Nevertheless, a specific structure for our Community Group ministry is necessary for the purpose of success.

Community Group Styles

- Community Group will be open to visitors as opposed to closed which is a style that restricts involvement only to those who are members of CBC.
- Each Community Group will be given a degree of freedom in determining the direction they will move in terms of their style or focus.
- Some groups may decide to establish themselves as intergenerational and family focused. These groups will combine the entire family and will cater to the needs which arise in such a setting.
- Other groups may choose to make special arrangements for the children of those who wish to be involved for the purpose of addressing more sensitive issues in a small group setting.
- Whatever style a group chooses, diligence should be exercised in order to keep within the “Vision” framework as laid out earlier in this document.

Community Group Leadership

- The leadership of each Community Group should consist of a Leader, Host and preferably an Assistant Leader.
- Leaders are asked/required to complete the leadership application in order to protect the integrity and vitality of Community Bible Church.
- A good practice for all leaders is to be on constant watch for additional leaders who may be able to start a new group when the need arises.
- Each leader is responsible for communicating with CBC leadership when special needs, concerns or emergencies arise.
- Leaders are encouraged to take advantage of training opportunities when made available and when participation is possible.
- Leaders should rotate between one another in order to break monotony and to allow for a break in primary responsibility. This would be best done at the beginning of each new study.

Community Group Hosts

- Hosts are also viewed as leaders since they are responsible for the setting and accommodations of the Community Group.
- Hosts and leaders should communicate regularly in order to retain unity within the group’s leadership structure.
Hosts are encouraged to evaluate their accommodations on a consistent basis in order to determine if a change in location or adjustments in current location is needed.

Hosts should offer as much of a notice as possible to leaders if meeting location will be unavailable.

**Community Group Curriculum**

- Those who are leading Community Groups are encouraged to exercise wisdom and discernment when choosing a topic/curriculum.
- In order to be responsible as your Pastor and to keep us from venturing in an area that would be detrimental to the group and the body, I do ask that if you are interested in utilizing material not found on the “pre-approved” list that you submit it to me (Pastor Benny) for review.
- This is not to suggest that you the leader are incapable of making a wise decision regarding this; however, the fact of the matter is that God has placed His leaders, the Elders of the church, in a position of responsibility as it relates to caring for the flock.
- Please try to do this as soon as possible before each Community Group kick off for your benefit and for the purpose of giving it appropriate attention.
- In many cases an email with all the pertinent information will suffice; however, in some cases I may need to see the book or material.
- Keep in mind that discretion should be exercised when choosing curriculum or topic, based upon the make-up and focus of your particular Community Group. *(For instance, if your group consists primarily of family’s and is an integrated group with no special arrangements for children, it is most likely not a good idea to teach on “God’s master plan for sexual intimacy in marriage”. Likewise, if your group consists of a large portion of unbelievers, it may not be a good idea to lead a small group in a study of “How to win a person to Christ in ten easy steps”...you get the point)*

**Community Group Meeting Time**

- Meeting times should be established and retained.
- Timeliness is very important and each group leader is encouraged to embrace promptness.
- We must keep in mind that schedules are very important to many families.

**Community Group Meeting Length**

- Although an open fellowship time is certainly a good idea, the actual meeting length each week should be kept between 1 ½ and 2 hours.

**Community Group Components**

- **Meal or Snack:** This is optional; however, it may prove beneficial in our attempt to enable folks to be involved, especially if our meeting time interrupts their normal schedule. However, we need to be equally sensitive with their time and make sure we keep the eating time reasonable to allow for the remaining components of our CG.
- **Prayer:** Prayer needs to be given a priority in our groups. Even unbelievers are often willing to share their concerns and this provides an opportunity to show our love and care to them. In addition, this is God’s desire in our lives and I believe it makes an enormous difference in our journey towards maturity.
- **Music:** Although I believe this could be done well and certainly be a positive addition to CG time, I would caution adding it if it is anything less than excellent. If a group chooses to engage in a time of singing it
should be well prepared and should be led well. If music is being played from a CD or radio, be sure it is not overbearing or needlessly offensive.

- **Bible study/group discussion:** This should be a foundational aspect to the CG meeting time. A number of options have been made known below which may or may not be the best choice for your group. Keep in mind that something can easily be lost when we simply settle for video driven series. I would encourage those men who are willing, to invest the time to attempt to lead a CG by facilitating discussion regarding the topic or book of study whenever possible. I realize this requires a time commitment; however, facilitating a discussion is much less laborious than “teaching”. I have provided each of you with a document that I believe will be beneficial in this endeavor. Even if you choose to go with a video curriculum, I would encourage interaction.

- **Adequate Seating:** Naturally, meeting in a home or smaller location will always present difficulties in this area but I encourage you to think through the details of this and do all you can to ensure the comfort of those who wish to be a part. In certain circumstances, although the willingness and desire are greatly appreciated, it may be necessary to meet somewhere other than one’s home if sufficient room and accommodations are not available. This is the responsibility of the leadership team for each particular Community Group.

- **Planning for Children:** Although we want to encourage family involvement we equally want to be realistic as it relates to our meeting time. Leaders and Hosts should discuss ahead of time how they will handle the needs of children. Due to the freedom that is being afforded to each group, this is primarily a decision that will be left to the group’s leadership. Nevertheless, as a word of caution, making an arbitrary decision based upon either the leader’s preference or only a small minority within the group will more than likely be detrimental to the group’s health and success. Thoughtfulness in this area calls for an “other’s centered” mentality and an understanding that it is not necessarily and always a negative thing to offer different opportunities for children to be taught and encouraged. With all of the recent information and talk regarding the failures of student ministry and children’s ministry, we need to be careful not to exchange one extreme approach with another.
Pre-Approved Video Driven Curriculum

1) Answers

This dynamic and challenging 12-part DVD series upholds the authority of the Bible from its very first verse. Powerful, foundational teaching by one of today’s foremost defenders of the Bible’s accuracy and authority, Ken Ham.

- Is Genesis Relevant Today?
- Did God Create in Six Literal Days?
- Why is there Death and Suffering?
- Is there Really a God?
- Do the Animals “Evolve”?
- Where do the “Races” Come From?
- What is the Only Answer to Racism?
- Dinosaurs—in the Bible?
- How can we Raise Godly Children?
- Fossils and the Flood—What’s the Connection?
- How can we Evangelize a Secular World? (Part 1)
- How can we Evangelize a Secular World? (Part 2)

2) Apologetics w/Ken Ham

Join popular apologist MIKE RIDDLE as he uses a classroom setting to present Bible-defending “basics.” With humor and colorful on-screen graphics, Mike reveals that the scientific evidence supports the biblical worldview of a young earth. He then gives the six main reasons for apologetics, plus essential steps for the successful use of apologetics. Each DVD is formatted into short segments for easy integration of discussion times in classrooms, Sunday schools, and Bible studies.

This set includes:

Apologetics 101: Evidence Supports a Biblical Young Earth
Apologetics 201: Reasons Why Apologetics is Important
Apologetics 301: How to Use Apologetics Successfully

3) Demolishing Strongholds

Today's youth are frustrated by "cookie cutter" teaching at youth group meetings and Sunday school. They want to have fun (who doesn't!) but they also want to be ready when challenged to take a stand for their faith. They want answers to the potentially embarrassing questions about Christianity that come up in classes AND in the hallway throughout the day. (How many times does a youth group have to discuss dating and drugs, anyway?)

Inspire your students to go to the next level in their Christian walk and challenge them to live out their faith with this totally comprehensive new 13-session DVD-based study.

Shot live before 300 teens and embellished with cutting-edge comic book style animation, Demolishing Strongholds features four highly engaging speakers: Ken Ham, Bill Jack, Charles Ware, and Carl Kerby. Each will prepare your students to stand firm on the authority of God’s Word, and each will equip and challenge them to activate their faith!
4) How We Know the Bible is True

*How Do We Know the Bible Is True?* is an essential primer of basic Christianity and apologetics that every believer should know. A 4-part collection.

*How Do We Know the Bible Is True? - Leader Guide & Workbook (FREE spiral-bound)*

Designed to supplement the DVD series, this guide/workbook contains an individual viewing guide, group viewing guide, and group discussion questions for each DVD. Ideal for personal or small group use. 76 pages. Retail $9.99. [Find out more.](#)

**The Authentic Christ**

By studying the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and how these prophecies point to the coming of Christ— authenticating the authority and credibility of His life on earth—Christians will understand as never before the amazing significance of Jesus of Calvary and all that His death means for us.

**The Life of William Tyndale**

At a time when reading the Bible in English was punishable by death, William Tyndale was used mightily of God to translate and print the Scriptures into English. Giving ordinary people the opportunity to read God’s Word, Tyndale’s work has influenced English translations for over 400 years!

**Scripture Under Scrutiny**

Translated into more than 420 languages, the Bible is still the world’s best-selling book. But where does our Bible come from and why can we be sure that it is reliable? These and many other questions are answered in this presentation.

**Why 66? The Canon of Scripture**

It has become all common for critics to dismiss the Bible’s credibility. It is time for some plain and simple truth. Join us as we trace the story of the Hebrew Scriptures, widely known as the Old Testament, and the writing and acceptance of the books of the New Testament. Edwards leads viewers to some unexpected and faith-strengthening conclusions.

5) Living by the Book

Join Dr. Howard G. Hendricks live as he shows you how to understand and apply God’s Word for yourself. Millions around the world have been captivated by this brilliant teacher’s highly energetic style, friendly manner, unforgettable illustrations, and laugh-out-loud humor. In these series of 25-minute sessions, Dr. Hendricks will walk you step-by-step through his signature model for self-study: Observation, Interpretation, Application. Your experience in Scripture will never be the same. And your life will be transformed as you begin Living by the Book!

6) Tommy Mitchell Series

Dr. Tommy Mitchell is a scientist, physician, and father who has a burden to provide solid answers from the Bible to equip people to stand in the face of personal tragedy and popular evolutionary misinformation.
A God of Suffering?

Month after month the world witnesses hurricanes, terrorist attacks, earthquakes, tsunamis and myriad other life-shattering events. It is quite understandable, therefore, that men and women demand a logical answer to the question, “Why would a loving God allow death and suffering?” That question is answered here.

Evolution of Darwin (The): His LIFE

Join Dr. Tommy Mitchell as he traces the events that influenced Darwin’s beliefs. From his grammar school days to his voyage on the HMS Beagle, viewers will see that Darwin added much to our understanding of the world around us. However, his foundation was not built on Scripture. The result was a dangerous idea that would spread across the globe, misinforming young people for generations to come. This captivating presentation is punctuated with interview segments that give a personal understanding of the man who made the idea of evolution famous.

Modern Medicine and Ancient Authority

In this important video, Dr. Tommy Mitchell, a practicing internist for over 20 years, clearly shows that belief in evolution is not necessary for the proper practice of medicine. Dr. Mitchell discusses various topics including antibiotic resistance, vestigial organs, the origin of germs, and euthanasia.

Jurassic Prank

In this very entertaining presentation, Dr. Tommy Mitchell uses clips from the movie Jurassic Park to illustrate how the world indoctrinates us with evolutionary concepts. Using the Bible, he shows how dinosaurs really fit into history while debunking many of the popular fallacies about these creatures.

7) The Truth Project

The Truth Project is a DVD-based small group curriculum comprised of 13 one-hour lessons taught by Dr. Del Tackett. This home study is the starting point for looking at life from a biblical perspective. Each lesson discusses in great detail the relevance and importance of living the Christian worldview in daily life.
**Options for ministering to families with children**

Because the age and makeup of the children in every small group is so different the best way to take care of the children varies greatly from group to group. The following are some suggestions for your consideration.

1. Have one to two folks from the group itself sign up each week to do childcare. This allows the group to get to know one another’s children, encourages serving one another, and is the most reliable form of care (you always have childcare workers available!).

2. Have the older children (teens) supervise the younger children in another room of the host home.

3. Have a rotation schedule in which the adults from the group take turns supervising the children in another room of the host home.

4. Have a rotation schedule in which the adults from the group take turns supervising the children in a home different that the host home.

5. Have someone lead a children’s small group simultaneous to the adult group in another room or location.

6. Have each child bring their own age appropriate toys, books, and videos with them. This eliminates the host home from having to try and gather age appropriate toys, etc… for a varied number of children. If each child takes care of their own activity needs, then all the children will get exactly what they need (and they can even learn to share with one another!).

7. Parents in different small groups that meet at different times cover each others’ childcare needs.

8. A small group consists of two subgroups. One provides childcare while the other meets, and then they switch places.

9. Small groups have some nights where childcare is provided and other nights where it is not.

10. Small groups are designed for the entire family to participate.

11. Retirees in the church provide childcare services for small groups as their ministry.

12. Have group members provide names of sitters they use and then exhaust this list.
13. Have each parent arrange babysitting for their own children.

14. Have all of the parents pool their money to pay babysitters to watch all the children at a different room in the host home.

15. Have all of the parents pool their money to pay babysitters to watch all the children at a home different that the host home.

16. Have a “backup group member” signed up each week to do childcare anyway even if a paid sitter is coming just in case something happens and the sitter can’t be there. This way you don’t have to determine this “on the fly” one night if the sitter can’t make it.

Various options for incorporating “family time” in SG meetings

- Group drama
- Tell stories
- Illustrate key parts of the Bible with drawings made together (murals are especially fun)
- Anything created during the family time can be saved in a scrapbook to remind children of what was learned and the fun had in doing it.
- Snack time
- Icebreakers for children
- Celebrate both adult and children’s birthdays and other key events.
- Group sharing includes children
Prayer. Pray for the right mindset before you minister to God’s people. There are times when we cannot be hospitable in our own strength. It is then that we must humble ourselves and ask for God’s strength to take over (2 Cor. 12:9 NIV).

Plan ahead. Try to make arrangements for refreshments to be ready in advance so that the group can be the entire focus for the meeting.

Give good instructions. Keep an open line of communication with your members to remind them of upcoming meetings. Provide good directions to the meeting place, along with details such as starting and ending times.

Keep group size small. The more people you have, the less opportunity you will have for ministry and the more risk you take of leaving someone out. Divide large groups into smaller groups for better intimacy and fellowship. CBC leadership can assist in this process. Ideally, the group will consist of 6-15 individuals.

Greet people when they arrive. Let the love of God shine through you when your guests arrive. Greet your guests with warm hugs and handshakes. If possible, open the door before they knock. Tell them you are glad they came.

Remembering the individuals. Keep notes on your guests. Record their names, needs, and prayer requests. Recalling facts about their lives in conversation shows you care about them, and this will help them to trust you so that you can minister to them.

Show a servant’s heart. Ask your leaders and assistants to help in getting visitors acclimated to the group. Get regulars to pitch in to assure everyone has full drinks and is comfortable.

Direct the meeting. Obviously the small group leader should bring up the topic of discussion and should keep the conversation flowing. It is also good to gently steer the conversation away from those who are overly talkative. If someone is quiet, ask for that person’s opinion from time to time. A more detailed document has also been provided in this guidebook.

Avoid favoritism. Make each guest valued, loved and appreciated, and do not have favorites (Gal. 2:6). If you see someone being left out, introduce that person to others in the group as a courtesy.

Bring the evening to an end. Close your meeting on a strong note, offering your guests the option of staying a little longer for fellowship or leaving. Say good-bye to everyone personally. Invite them to come back again.
**Basic Listening Skills**

Community Groups should involve careful conversation—and the leader of the group needs to demonstrate careful listening skills.

1. **Be quiet.** This should be obvious, but it often is the biggest obstruction to listening. The leader should be part of a discussion without monopolizing it.

2. **Try to understand.** The goal of listening is to understand what the person is really saying.

3. **Control distractions.** People feel comfortable sharing when they are not interrupted. Consider turning the ringer off on the phone. Don't look at your watch or lesson plan when someone is speaking, etc.

4. **Empathize.** Interject short statements to show you understand and accept what the person is saying. "That sounds exciting!" or "That must have been a hard decision to make" are good examples of how to show empathy.

5. **Don't judge.** Especially when someone is already hurting, a judgmental attitude can do more harm than good. Don't condone sin, of course, but recognize the difference between acceptance and approval.

6. **Avoid advising.** Unless stemming from the study, it is generally a good rule to steer away from an attempt to solve everyone’s problems.

7. **Verify and clarify.** If you don't understand what someone is saying, ask: "Here's what I hear you saying. Am I right?"

8. **Listen for what is not said.** Try to hear the meaning behind the words. Watch body language and listen to tone of voice. Sometimes what a person is saying is lost behind a clutter of words.

9. **Watch body language.** Sometimes a person’s posture or gestures can say more than words.

10. **Affirm.** Say, "Thanks for sharing that. I'm sure it isn't easy to talk about right now." This builds acceptance for talking about difficult things.
Taming the Over-talkative

The following are some suggestions for dealing with overly-talkative small group members (in increasing order of severity or riskiness).

1. Make sure it is not you that is being over-talkative.
2. Reiterate any agreed-upon ground rules, like “Let’s listen to one another,” or “Try to reverse your normal pattern and talk less/more.”
3. Use careful question directions such as, “I want two people who have not said anything yet to respond,” or “I want everyone to answer this one.”
4. Use a stopwatch (literally) to set time limits on answers (no one will mind, for everyone will be in the same boat).
5. Sit right beside the talkative person, reducing the eye contact which cues contributions.
6. Interrupt the person in the middle of a long speech and say, “You have made several excellent points—let’s see if there is any response to what you have said.”
7. Stop looking at the person while he or she is talking—it usually will slow the person down, again because eye cues cease.
8. Expect a mature group to do the work for you, with members humorously and gently reminding the talkative person that he or she is “doing it again.” When trust has been built, such communication is possible.
9. Ask the person privately to help draw quieter folks out. (This is a favorite suggestion in textbooks, but it is dangerous because most talkative people are not dumb—they will know what you are up to—and, besides, quieter folks do not like being drawn out.)
10. Ask the person privately or publicly to shut up (in many ways, the private approach is more risky).

Some of these suggestions may appear to include impolite behavior. But my point is that even interrupting a member is worth it if the health of the group is at stake.¹

¹Williams, D. (1997). Seven myths about small groups: How to keep from falling into common traps. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.