

Why Small Groups Are Great

By Preston Yoder

My first real connection to LCF came through dating Elizabeth and joining her small group meetings on several occasions in Columbus. They say that you don't appreciate heat until you have been out in the cold, and I find the principle also applies to close connections in fellowship. I was living in Cincinnati at the time and feeling a lack of deep and personal fellowship. College, work, and the little church I was involved in filled up my time, and I found myself lacking close connections with peers.



Fortunately for the health of my soul, I was dating Elizabeth, and my frequent trips to the Rosedale area always filled me with joy. I still remember the first time we went to Columbus for an LCF post-high small group meeting. The group studied and talked about a passage of Scripture, shared prayer requests for each other, then finished with some great snack food. The experience was like a drop of water to my parched soul. I realized I'd almost forgotten what it was like to be in a group of peers and have fellowship and a spiritual connection.

When Elizabeth and I got married two months ago, we both wanted to continue going to the small group. We find the fellowship to be encouraging, and the Bible study and prayer times to be challenging. What really makes the small group great is that it gives us all time to be together in a much more personal way than what takes place at church. Church is great for corporate worship and touching base with people, but small groups are much better at providing opportunities for sharing and developing deeper connections.

Some weeks it seems like it would be easier to let the meetings go, because it feels like just another event on the calendar. But we've found that if we don't go we will wish we had later when we feel like we haven't really connected with anyone that week. We shouldn't let busy schedules keep us from enjoying this necessary part of the Christian life. When we gather together in the love of God, and share that love and fellowship with each other, we are giving and receiving a spiritual and emotional boost that will help us thrive throughout the week.

Inside this Issue	
Why Small Groups Are Great	1
A Thankful Heart	2
From the Editor	2
Getting to Know Colleen Wolford	3
Elders' Notes	4

Without small group I would not know my peers in the church half as well. I'd have a little time to talk after church, but that would be it. I wouldn't know their backgrounds or their thoughts on different scriptures. I would not have been inside their houses or sat on such a variety of furniture. Without small group I would not have prayed for people's life situations—perhaps I would not have known their situations at all. I would not have been able to give my prayer requests and accept the prayers, fellowship, and friendship of a great though small group of friends.



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London Christian Fellowship seeks to develop authentic and passionate followers of Jesus Christ.

A Thankful Heart

A Message from the Pastor

By Rob Swartz



I asked my wife Doris what I should write about this month and she said “thanksgiving.” I argued that would be a bit predictable. I can be stubborn, but obviously she won the argument. She said, “There’s so much to be thankful for at LCF and this is a good time to express it.” And she’s right.

Last Sunday after the service I was talking with a gentleman and he said “You know, this is the highlight of my week, being here.” I knew what he meant. It felt good to know that our objective of helping people meet God was in some way accomplished.

I looked around as people were hanging out after the service—talking, laughing, and sharing with one another—and I recognized that important “body life” was happening. I thought about and was thankful for those who had helped with the service: the greeters, the ushers, the worship team, the sound and video people, the preacher, the Sunday school teachers, the nursery workers...and I’m sure I missed someone. Everyone ought to feel good that God is using them to accomplish His purposes.

I watched Kelvin head out the door with the broken vacuum cleaner and I was thankful for people who take care of those things. And did you notice the new roof on the church and the concrete pad for handicapped parking and the night light that was repaired? Kelvin and his team are making sure those things get done and I am very grateful.

A few weeks ago our men’s discipleship group, Strive, met to kick off our next year and I was blessed. I was impressed to see these guys get together at 7:00 a.m. on a chilly Saturday morning and then to hear them open their hearts to each other. It was awesome. As I drove home I could do nothing but thank God for that time together.

About a month ago I had the opportunity to hang out with the young-adult small group. I was encouraged to see these young people wrestling with the truths of scripture and how to apply it to their lives. Once again I noticed real body life happening—sharing, caring and a true desire to be involved in each other’s lives.

I’m thankful for the church’s ownership of ministry. People have stepped up to be small group leaders and help with sound, worship, the library, and a variety of other needs.

I don’t have time or space to mention all of you, but Doris and I want you to know that we are so thankful to be a part of this local body of believers. It is an honor to serve alongside you in this ministry that God has called us to at LCF. This has been a challenging year for Doris and I; we won’t pretend otherwise. We have shed a few tears along the way, but we are deeply grateful for the body of believers at LCF and for the ways you have shown your gratitude and support to us.

I echo the prayer that Paul prayed for the Philippians:

“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:3-6).

From the Editor

It’s almost Thanksgiving, and we know what that means. Family, great food, and Christmas ads. Turkey, mashed potatoes, and “buy your wife a Lexus this year”. Harvest decorations and football on TV with “Jingle Bells” in the background. People getting grouchy about Christmas a month in advance.

I happen to love Thanksgiving, and Christmas too. On the other hand, I hate being manipulated by ads for Christmas stuff for an entire month. There are so many lying messages about what a good Christmas is and about what brands people buy for their friends if they are truly classy. I’m one of the people that get grouchy.

On the other hand, I don’t like it when Christmas gets all the criticism for what advertisers are doing. “There’s too much materialism in Christmas,” or “There’s no Christ in Christmas any more.” It seems like you somehow get bonus spirituality points for looking down on Christmas, when how you celebrate the season is entirely up to you—not the advertisers.

So what to do about it? Throw out the tree, tear down the tinsel, and eat crackers and water on Christmas day? Celebrate only the religious aspects of the holiday and look down on the “materialistic” others?

Not me. I love presents, feasting, and decorations. I think the key is not to let advertisers ruin your Thanksgiving or your Christmas. Enjoy the good parts of the holidays, celebrate in a way that’s meaningful for you, and if Jingle Bells drives you nuts don’t listen to the radio. And don’t feel guilty for not buying your wife a Lexus.



Getting to Know... *Colleen Wolford*

What are your hobbies?

I like to do anything outdoors. In the summer I like to swim, and boat, and play sports outside. I like to canoe or kayak. In the winter I like to ski and sled, so just about anything you can do outside. I also enjoy reading.

What are some of the jobs you've had?

I'm a physical therapist, so since I graduated from college those are the kinds of jobs I've had. I've mostly worked in acute-care hospitals. Right now I work up at Doctors West Hospital but I have also worked in a couple of different nursing homes.

So what does a physical therapist do?

My main job is to evaluate patients that doctors have referred us to, and try to help them with whatever physical problems they're having; in addition to helping them decide what they're going to need when they leave the hospital. We work with the patients and families to make those kinds of decisions and often make the arrangements for those things. We also begin the rehab process to try to help them get stronger and work on whatever impairments they might have.



If you could have any pet, what would it be?

Well, we have a cat, and that's probably my favorite. My daughter wants a dog, but I keep telling her "maybe someday." We also have a hamster and to be honest, that's not much of a pet for me. She just wants to bite me every time I try to hold her. I do like dogs but I'd rather not have a dog that barks all the time, or is too huge for the house, or sheds or stinks too much. So if I see that perfect dog...

What was your favorite subject in school?

Probably math. I've always enjoyed math; it came easily for me. Algebra was always fun for me. I enjoyed trying to figure out the problems.



Coffee or tea?

Tea. I don't even like the smell of coffee.

City or country?

I would say as I get older I like the country more. When I was a little bit younger I might have picked city, but I tend to like more relaxed things now than I used to.

Which college did you go to?

I went to Grand Valley State University in Michigan. It's a smaller school, about the same size as Bowling Green.

You're from Michigan? So you sympathize with Rob on the Michigan issue?

A little bit. To be honest I'm not a big football fan, so it doesn't make very much difference to me, but I do like to tease people a little bit because it seems to be such a big deal around here.

Elders' Notes

Ideas and thoughts from recent meetings

Church leadership

The elders are discussing concerns with the church leadership structure and how to best go about church leadership. They think it's an area that needs some improvement. They are discussing how to have a broader church leadership base since deacons no longer serve with elders as trustees. They have come up with several ideas on how to do this.

One is to go back to having deacons who serve with the elders as trustees, which would give more people in the congregation a voice in leadership. Another idea is to have leaders of the ministry teams and the elders form a group with a layperson as chair. Or, someone from the congregation could be elected to serve as a representative in administrative matters.

The elders are considering seeking outside advice from a person with experience in church organization who could give feedback on the current setup and ideas about how to improve. They will also try to get input from the church during the January 10 congregational meeting.

Church communication

The elders also want to continue to do a better job at communicating with the congregation. The LCF Connection was a step towards better communication. In addition, they plan to add two congregational meetings each year to get specific feedback from the church, the first being January 10.

There used to be ministry questionnaires every fall that gave people a chance to express interest in areas they would like to serve and use their gifts. The elders are talking about doing something like that again.

Pastor's office location

Another topic of discussion at the elders' meeting was whether Rob should have office hours at the church. One reason would be to provide more visibility to his work hours. There have also been some concerns expressed about safety when women are at the church cleaning or having a Bible study and there is no one else around. Rob says he would be glad to be there at such times, as long as several people are there. If people would like him to be there they just need to let him know ahead of time.

In general, however, the feeling was that it makes more sense for Rob to work from home. His commentaries, reference books and files are at his house, and he has a better internet connection there. The elders also think he may be able to work more efficiently at home. However, Rob is willing to do whatever the church desires in this regard. He and the elders team would welcome any feedback from others in the congregation on this subject.

The building project

The fundraising team presented the elders with a list of ideas on how to raise money for the building project over the coming year. The ideas include holding an auction, putting on a drama, doing service projects, and selling food at local events. The elders liked the ideas and encouraged the team to get feedback from the church about them.

Do you have something you want to say about the ideas for church leadership, communication, Rob's office location, or fundraising? Send us an email at connection@lcfweb.org.

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If you'd like to make comments on any of the stories or "LCF Connection" in general, email us at: connection@lcfweb.org.

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