



LOVE STARTS HERE GROUP MISSIONS EXPERIENCE

LEADER PREPARATION

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” - 1 Timothy 6:17–19

Our missions series this winter at Faith Promise is titled “Love Starts Here.” Our hope for this series is that every single group at FP will engage in an intentional way to meet the needs of someone else. Your group might accomplish this through serving with a local ministry partner, it might be serving at a church event, or it could be something totally new that your group individually develops on their own. Last year, during our 28 Days of Life missions series, we had an extraordinary response. We were amazed at the generosity of our church family as we gave and served people in so many different communities.

We’ve created this missions small group experience because good things happen in groups that make serving together a priority. We are so convinced this is true that we have made “Engaging the World Around Us” one of our foundational building blocks in groups. If your group gets into the habit of serving together on a regular basis and celebrating the stories that come out of that service, exciting things—life- changing things—will begin to happen in your group, in our church, and in your community.

While the response to past serving days and events (like Operation Inasmuch) has been overwhelmingly positive, there has been one consistent complaint: there aren’t enough service opportunities for everyone interested in participating. Our service partners are not able to provide enough volunteer slots for everyone who wants to get involved on specific days. Coordinating 200 serving projects (with 6,000 volunteer slots) on a single morning across 5 campuses is next to impossible! **That’s why we’d like those who are already connected in community (that’s you!) to work together to create their own service opportunities.** That’s what this group experience is all about. It will help you and your group figure out how and whom you can serve. Creating your own service opportunity will not only be good for your group, but will allow us as a church to provide simpler service opportunities (i.e., those that we make available on the website) to those in our church who are not connected in small groups.

When it comes to actually planning your group’s service project, you may discover that finding a time when everyone is available and an opportunity in which everyone can participate is difficult—especially as we enter in to this busy holiday season. Keep in mind that the more your group is able to do together, the more valuable the experience will be. Make it your goal to find a project that involves as many in your group as possible.



What we're asking you to do:

- Reserve a portion of your next group meeting to lead your group through the attached small group discussion guide.

In preparation:

- Read the rest of this document—Leader Preparation—especially the **“Preparing Your Group Members for the Discussion”** section below. This section in particular will help you prepare for a tension that may surface in your group.
- Print a copy of the What Next Takeaway for each of your group members.

During your group meeting:

- Work through the Discussion Guide together. ****Bring pen/paper for group members***
- Select a date, make a plan, and assign roles to the group

At the next group meeting:

- Share updates on potential serving opportunities.
- Make final decision on whom you will serve, what you will do, and when you will do it.

After you've served:

- Have the assigned person post on the faithpromise.org/missions web page with an update on Who/When/Where/How your group served.
- We suggest spending a few minutes in a future group meeting discussing your serving experience. Talk about dates for another serving opportunity in the Spring of 2016 and give ownership of that project to a group member.

Finally, here are a few guiding principles that will help you lead this group experience well:

- Ideally, your group members will be able to serve together. Choose your opportunity with this in mind.
- You don't have to serve with a nonprofit organization.
- You don't have to serve only the poor. Other people need help too. (Think those who've suffered a loss, or who are ill, or in emotional distress.)
- You have everything you already need to fulfill the purpose God has for you.



Preparing Your Group Members for the Discussion Time

As previously mentioned, the goal of the small group exercise is for your group members to create a service opportunity in which the majority of your group members can spend time serving together. To set you up for success, we want to prepare you for a specific situation that you may face.

In the Discussion Guide, your group members will be asked to list the names of people they know that are hurting in one form or another. For example, you'll ask the group to list any widows, single-parent families, or families dealing with unemployment. We want you to be aware of the possibility that someone in your group might belong on your list. Your group may have a widow, a single mom or dad, someone who is unemployed, or someone who has a family member dealing with an illness.

We trust your discernment as to whether your group could or should serve that person, or whether it would be better to direct your attention outside the group. Either is acceptable.

Most of all, we want to urge you to have a conversation before doing this group exercise with the group member(s) whose name(s) might belong on your group's list. It is important that you address this first.

In some situations it would be appropriate to ask a group member to be a willing recipient of the group's generosity. It may be uncomfortable for that group member, but that does not mean that it is not a good idea or even the best idea for your group.

In other situations it may be better to focus the group's generosity outside the group. Depending on the dynamics, you, as a leader, may need to make this decision or you may arrive at this decision collaboratively with the particular group member or members.

Again, either is acceptable. If you feel like your group has a particularly complicated situation, please contact your Groups Coach or Missions Pastor for guidance.

Please don't discard this exercise simply because it might be uncomfortable for your group. Good things often happen when we are pushed out of our comfort zones and when we face challenges head-on. We certainly believe that to be the case when it comes to serving and generosity.



Frequently Asked Questions

What if we can't find something for everyone in the group to do together?

Everyone can serve someone. While it is optimal for the group members to do something together, it is not always possible. If that is the case in your group, do your best to help everyone find a way to contribute or someone to serve on their own schedule that works for them. They can also sign up for a pre-planned project at faithpromise.org/missions.

Can we still sign up for a pre-planned project? (YES)

Yes, you can. We would never tell you or ask you not to serve. We do ask, however, that you not discard this exercise and wait for the simpler service opportunities to be released on the churches website. We want to give those in our church who are not connected in a small group the first priority for these service projects. The hope is that participating in service together will be a catalyst for them to become more connected in the future. **With all that in mind, we will need some groups to volunteer with our Angel Tree Shopping Experience, as well as some of our other local partners, so feel free to do so if it works best.**

Why don't you just find more nonprofits to partner with so that you can provide our attendees with more service project options?

We have purposefully capped the number of nonprofit partners we have at our church in order to be able to have a meaningful depth to our relationships with them. During the mission's series, we are able to supply more volunteers than these partners can handle. The same is not true throughout the year. Also, our goal is to help your group gain new perspective on all the opportunities that God may have already put in your path that you are now better equipped to recognize and respond to.

What if someone in our group could benefit from the group's service?

See the Preparing Your Group Members for the Exercise section above for suggestions on how to navigate this situation.